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LABOR-VALUE FALLACY

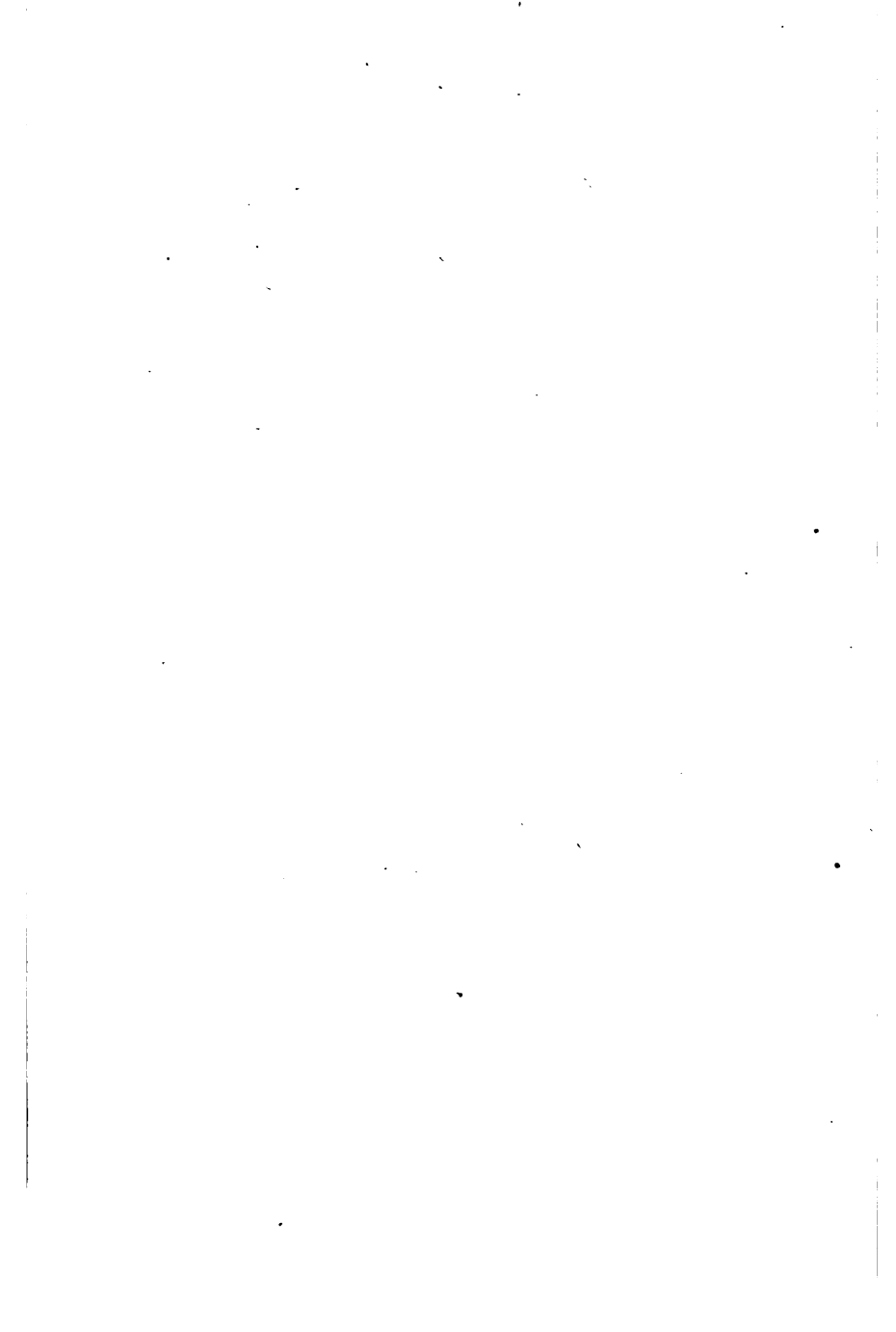
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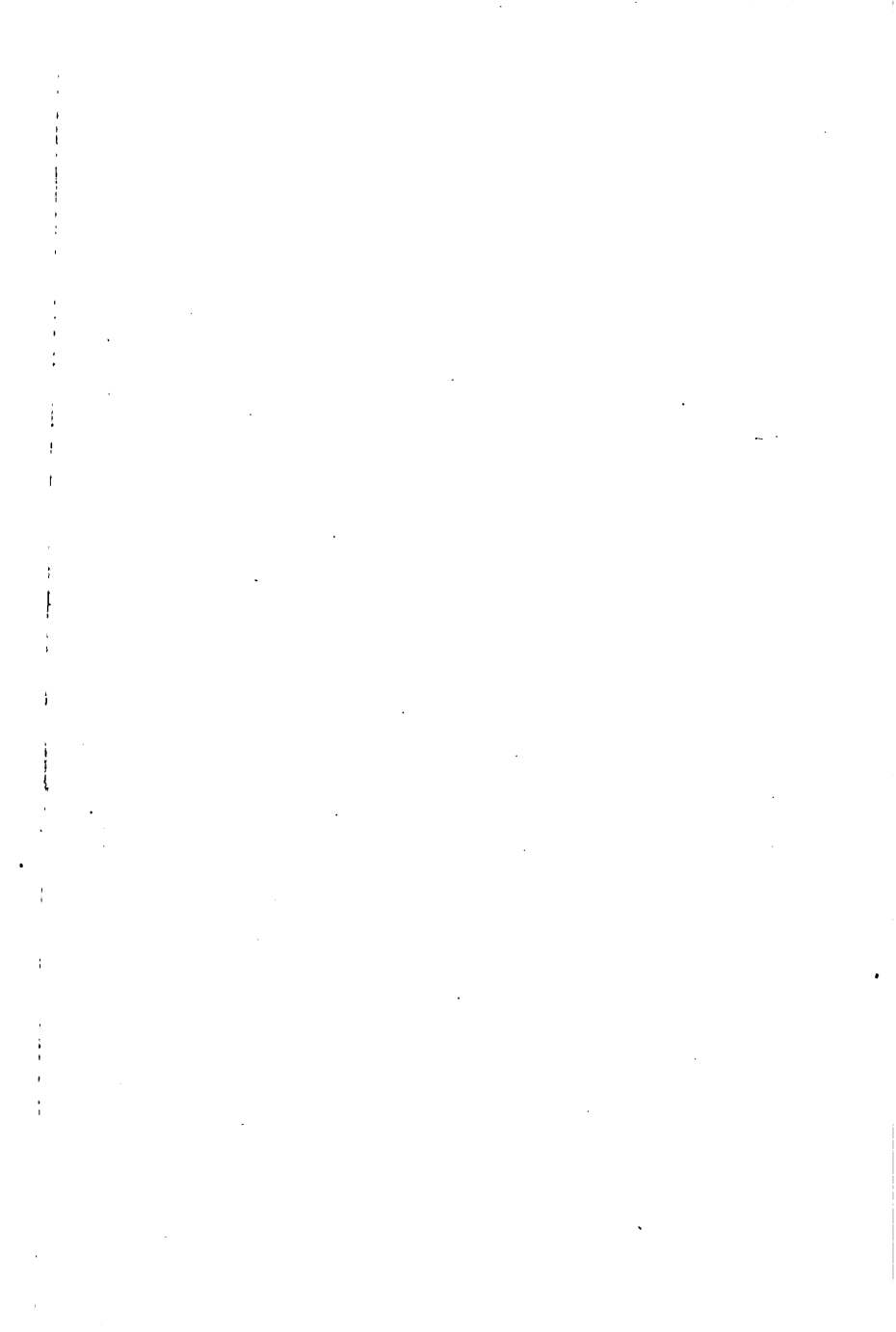
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THE
LABOR-VALUE FALLACY.

BY M. L. SCUDDER, JR.,
AUTHOR OF "CONGESTED PRICES," ETC.



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INTRODUCTION.

No one can regard with absolute indifference the fierce discussions concerning social relations which are now agitating Europe and America. Every inhabitant of these continents has something at stake upon the outcome of these discussions; and it is very important that sincere men should be able to take a clear and confident stand in these disputes.

I have observed that a large proportion of men, who are beyond question intelligent and sincere, are far from confident in reference to socialism. On the contrary, I have found many benevolent, well-informed men in avowed sympathy with socialism. It is not uncommon to hear a good word for socialism spoken by careful and conservative citizens, and not infrequently I have heard socialist arguments put by, as impracticable, solely on the ground that mankind never can expect to reach perfection.

For a long time I was befogged and perplexed by socialist reasoning. The arguments seem unanswerable, when their theory alone is considered; but their application to practical affairs involves so

much that is unfair and unjust, so much that is destructive of the noblest qualities of individual character, and the most prized influences of social life that their adoption seems a dreadful possibility. It seems that in order to follow a correct theory, one must engage in a cruel crusade against the cherished institutions of modern civilization. The choice is a hard one; and yet, I believe, that there are thousands in whose minds, this question has taken this form. I believe that there are many thousands of well-meaning, order-loving people, who, affected by socialist reasoning and the current teaching of political economy, entertain more or less well defined opinions, that the principles upon which society is organized are radically wrong.

The manner in which the writings of Mr. Henry George have been received, read and commented upon, shows this quite sufficiently. I do not say that he has secured, in this country, a large following, who are ready to put in practice his scheme for the "nationalization of the land." His book, "Progress and Poverty," which posterity will probably adjudge mere balderdash, has had a wider circulation than any other book published in recent years. It has been seriously and respectfully read; and the tone in which editors and professors and thoughtful men speak of it, shows, at least, that much doubt

exists as to whether his claims are not sound. The partial and inadequate character of the replies which have been made to his arguments, and the bad temper with which his views have been denounced without being disproved, exhibit too the profound impression which he has made on the public mind. I think, I may describe the state of mind, in which Mr. George's book is generally read, as one of involuntary credulity. Men refuse to accept and act upon the conclusions, but do not deny the argument.

Although I venture into this field with much hesitation, I shall attack the very foundation of Mr. George's argument. In doing this, I shall be compelled to controvert the positive conclusions of much higher authority than Mr. George can claim to be. I expect to be misunderstood by the superficial, condemned by the careless, and perhaps villified by partisans and controversialists. I wish to disclaim at the outset a too positive tone, for in examining these great questions there is always the danger that one may mistake a part of the subject for the whole. There may be facts just outside the field of vision, which, if embraced in the view, would materially modify or change the picture. But while admitting this possibility, I shall strive to tell accurately, and without prejudice, so much as I have to tell. The proper spirit it seems to me, is that each

one shall describe clearly what each one sees, but with the constant admission that no one can see it all.

I do not appeal to the authority of great names, but to the every-day common sense of those who favor me with their attention, and I shall be satisfied if I may be able to impart to some well-meaning men new confidence in old virtues. (If I can show that intelligence, diligence, sobriety and honesty still remain the only trustworthy means by which success and contentment can be attained, and that all theories for securing the rewards of these virtues, without the rigid practice of them are fallacious and vain, I shall rest well pleased.

There are many who are looking gloomily into the future, seeing there the triumph of socialism—family ties and home life destroyed, social intercourse made a monotonous routine of distasteful endurance, and man reduced to a mere feeding, muscle-exerting machine. It is my aim to prove to those discouraged by this vision, that the true progress of mankind is not in this direction, and that it needs but a clear appreciation of the fundamental conditions of economic relations to dissipate this disagreeable apprehension. This horrible Frankenstein, socialism, now dominates with its baleful power many minds. If the central and vital secret of this

monstrous enchantment can be touched and destroyed, it will vanish shrieking, like the baffled evil genius of the Arabian tale, and its victims, relieved of its paralyzing presence, will breathe again with old courage and hope.



THE LABOR-VALUE FALLACY.

THERE are two kindred propositions, which are generally tacitly assented to, and which I think produce a vast amount of discontent and misery. These are

1st. *All wealth is created by labor.*

2nd. *The title to all wealth ought to be vested in the laborers who have produced it.*

To a great many intelligent people, I have no doubt, these propositions seem self-evident truths. They pass currently unchallenged. They appear as the foundations of the creeds of nearly all the labor agitators. They give the key note to the labor discussions in the newspapers. They figure prominently in political platforms, and in the minds of numbers of men, who are neither agitators, editors nor politicians, there is a consciousness, proceeding from habit, that it is useless to question these dictums. There are thousand of workmen, too, to whom these propositions have an almost religious sacredness, and in whom, sullen rage and feelings of continued injury are produced, by ruminating upon them. They furnish the basis for all modern socialist systems. The International with its million of members, the Nihilist societies of Europe, the socialist-labor parties of Germany and the United States, have been animated

and energized by belief in them. And whatever of logical consistency one can discover in the writings of Mr. Henry George, comes from the assumption of the truth of these, his fundamental premises.

It is my purpose to call in question the truth of these important propositions. I think them wholly false. I think that all theories and systems springing from them must be erroneous and demoralizing, and that all attempts to put them in practice will end disastrously.

The germ of the proposition that all wealth is created by labor can be traced to Adam Smith. He said, in "the Wealth of Nations," "The real price of everything, what everything really costs to the man who wants to acquire it, is the toil and trouble of acquiring it, etc." "Labor was the first price—the original purchase-money that was paid for all things." "In that early and rude state of society, which precedes both the accumulation of stock and the appropriation of land, the proportion between the quantities of labor necessary for acquiring different objects, seems to be the only circumstance which can afford any rule for exchanging them for one another."

These and other similar expressions, which can be found in his book, are by no means the equivalent of the modern form of this proposition. Adam Smith seems to regard these ideas concerning value, as merely suggestive, and as applying especially to the early and chiefly imaginary condition of man. When he treats of actual transactions in the market, he accounts for the values of commodities in quite another way. But he

said enough to suggest the notion to Ricardo, and it was by him made more definite and positive. Ricardo maintained that the exchangeable values of commodities are in proportion to the quantities of labor expended in their production. But he carefully explained that this is true only of commodities in the production of which unrestrained competition is possible.

John Stuart Mill gave much encouragement to the growth of this proposition, by the professed adoption of Ricardo's definition, although qualifying his approval by many important conditions. He said, "The value of commodities therefore depends principally, . . . on the quantity of labor required for their production; including in the idea of production that of conveyance to market." He also carefully limited the application of this rule, "to cases in which values and prices are determined by competition alone."

Following in the foot-steps of these illustrious thinkers, subsequent writers on political economy have treated of value as the creation of labor, generally complicating the idea with more or less original modifications, but almost always presenting labor as the most important element in determining value. Even Bastiat's definition of value, "the relation of two services exchanged," receives this interpretation from many of his disciples, service being understood by them to mean labor.

The result of these discussions has been, that the various complicated exceptions to this theory of value have been overlooked by general readers, and the cen-

tral idea only has remained in the popular opinion ; and it has come to be commonly accepted as a fundamental truth, that value is created solely by labor.

On this foundation the socialists have built. Karl Marx is probably the leading socialist reasoner, and his reasoning starts from the assumption, that all value should be measured in units of labor. It was his argument, preached among the workmen of Germany and France, which caused a million names to be enrolled as members of the secret society of the International. It was his teaching, developed though the International, which contrived, directed and afterwards approved the atrocities perpetrated in 1871, under the Commune of Paris. These theories animate the nihilists of Russia, and kindle in the breasts of students and young girls an enthusiasm for assassination and destruction, which the severest punishments cannot repress.

I confess, that if Karl Marx is right, in assuming that all value is created by labor, and that laborers are justly entitled to the products of their labor, that it is extremely difficult to show where his followers are logically wrong, in concluding that all private property is theft, that property owners are generally criminals, and that those who support and administer governments, which do not recognize the right of the laborer to possess all the products of his labor, are social pests, whom it may be a social duty to remove.

That this conclusion is warranted by this premise, is evidenced by the paralysis which has affected the reasoning world, while these results of these doctrines are

being worked out before the public eyes. Intelligent men all over the world shudder at these sights, but are dumb. Aristocrats tremble, contrive more terrible penalties, and make martyrs of the fanatics. Men of peace and property everywhere look with apprehension into the future, and hope the present organization of society will last out their time. But no where is there a voice raised to say, that this crusade against society is based upon a cunning falsehood, which will prove an economic absurdity, whenever brought to a practical test.

✓ The following is the argument, which leads from the admission that all wealth springs from labor, to the justification of the annihilation of civilization, by a chain whose links are too strong to be easily broken :

All wealth, that is everything which has exchangeable value is created by labor. Then everything not created by labor has no exchangeable value and is not wealth. But many things not created by labor are bought and sold and treated as wealth. It follows that traffic, in things not created by labor, is a wrong done to laborers. All things not produced by labor are for the common use of all men. That individuals should be permitted to appropriate to their own exclusive use these objects, and shut out other men from the enjoyment of them, is a monstrous outrage. To put an end to this wrong is the aim of socialism. But it can be readily seen that the task of remodeling society by degrees is a hopeless one. So intricately is this great so-called wrong woven in all the

relations of men, that centuries of continuous agitation can not be expected to eliminate it. There is logically and consistently nothing to be done but to destroy the whole fabric, and make out of the ruins a new civilization, which shall know no wealth but that created by labor.

In the view of the sincere socialist mankind will be perfectly prosperous and happy, if all the gifts of nature are held as common possessions, and if a benevolent common government supplies the wants of each individual, while expecting each to create value for the common benefit, according to his ability. Believing this, and seeing poverty and misery in every habitable land, is it wonderful that the earnest socialist proposes thorough measures. To the majority of persons, who are quiet, law-fearing, property-cherishing citizens, the anarchists and nihilists seem savage beasts, and their doctrines the incomprehensible malice of fiends. But to themselves, it can not be doubted, they appear self devoted benefactors of the human race. Their enthusiasm has been compared by a careful observer to that displayed by the early Christians, when they looked hopefully for the general destruction of the world, and saw, with eyes of faith, a new heaven and a new earth arise from the burning elements, and were led by this vision to willing martyrdom.

It is remarkable that although socialist doctrines, based on the labor value of all property, have been earnestly advocated by many able and sincere men

such as Saint Simon, Owen, Fourier and Marx, for more than half a century, they have produced no impression upon the organization of society. As far as I can discover, there has been no change or modification of social order effected by socialist sentiment, and yet these sentiments have received respectful attention, especially in this country, and have been adopted and put to practical test, at one time or another, by many well informed and earnest people. Isn't it strange, that if there is any thing really capable of improving society in socialism, it should not have developed by this time, and been made use of? That no such influence has come from socialist discussions is pretty good evidence, that no beneficial reforms of present conditions should be looked for from that source. It is evidence also, that the extreme socialists, the anarchists and nihilists, are logically correct in their position. Socialism is incapable of modifying existing society and changing its form by degrees. The only consistent socialist is he who goes to the root of the matter at once, and desires the total destruction of all property, that on the ruins of civilization, a new society may grow up, in which no property will be permitted to exist, which will not exchange according to the quantity of labor exerted in producing it. The only mistake the anarchists and nihilists make is in not going far enough. (Their programme is incomplete, in leaving human nature unchanged.) To fully accomplish their object, they need the services of a comet or of a glacial epoch to wipe mankind off the earth's surface, and then they would

be obliged to find a new creative energy, to produce a new order of beings, who would "produce according to their capacities and consume according to their needs." There is no other reform radical enough to satisfy the demands of the socialist theories, and no less thorough measures will give their system a fair chance.

The anarchists deride their half-hearted brethren, who merely advocate the confiscation of private ownership of land, for the inconsistency and the inefficiency of their proposals. They sneer equally at the moderate (!) idea, which is now cherished by probably a majority of the workmen of France, that the State or the municipalities may be captured by the exercise of the elective franchise, and the rate of wages fixed to meet the wants of the laborers, some sort of penalty established for exceeding the regular hours of labor, and a law passed that work (and a satisfactory compensation) shall always be furnished to those desiring it by somebody. The anarchists are right. These reforms can never be secured by peaceful means, and can never be made parts of the present systems. The whole theory of existing governments is opposed to these changes. If carried by all the ordained means of establishing laws, not one of these propositions could be successfully put into effect. They would fail as all similar laws have heretofore failed, and their discouraged projectors would then have no refuge for their hopes, but in anarchism and the complete demolition of all governments. The anarchists are acute enough to see

this, and so they treat all these moderate counselings with undisguised contempt. The anarchists are the enthusiasts, the fanatics of socialism. They will hesitate at nothing, if a chance for action presents itself, and, consistent in their belief, they will lead, and if a temporary advantage is gained, the mass of more conservative socialists will follow them, just as they followed them in Paris in 1871. France is just now the field in which these demonstrations are most likely to be made. A great part of the handicraftsmen and many of the agricultural laborers have socialist opinions. A political revolution will furnish opportunity. The anarchists will assume control, and will display a reckless energy, which Frenchmen always admire. They will be followed by an immense army, which will wage war, in all the large cities of France, not only against persons but against property, and will destroy with a wantonness which has never been known before. This civil war will end, as it only can end, in the restoration of order in a desolated land.

This is all likely to happen, and will possibly be the next important event in the record of socialism. This is all caused by the belief that all value is created by labor, and that the laborer is rightfully the owner of the products of his labor. If these propositions are true, the socialist mob will be justified in reducing to ruins the cities of France. There is no stopping place, between admitting these propositions and committing France and every other civilized land to dynamite and fire. Is not this sufficient to suggest grave doubts, as

to the ability of labor to create value? Is not this a sufficient *reductio ad absurdum*?

The tendency to socialism is probably indicated by the desire to advise rich men how to make the best use of their property. This office of gratuitous adviser to the wealthy is assumed by many well-meaning people, including not a few editors of newspapers. These speak with the air of authority, as if they had some sort of public commission, and threaten dreadful but indefinite consequences if their advice is not followed. These would probably disclaim any socialist sympathy.

The mildest form of acknowledged socialism is probably represented by the proposition to compel, by unequal taxation or otherwise, the owners of large unoccupied estates to dispose of their lands or open them to settlement. I think the beginning of socialism may be seen in an inclination to make the burden of taxation rest, in undue proportion, on the larger owners of property. This would be a virtual violation of the implied contract which society has entered into with each of its members, which stimulates individual exertion by guaranteeing (equal protection to all.) It would discourage exertion by putting a stigma on good fortune and success.)

The proposal is sometimes made that large incomes should be taxed at a high rate for the avowed purpose of preventing property accumulating in single hands. This would be a return to semi-civilized methods, such as prevail in oriental countries, where men are forced

to conceal their riches from the rapacious tax-gatherers, in order to avoid confiscation.

Bismarck has been accused of socialist tendencies, because he has proposed to establish a state insurance of support to workmen, disabled in prosecuting their craft. But this may be explained, as a measure of public policy ; and such a system might and probably would be administered by the German government, so that it would not offer a reward for shirking. It can easily be imagined, that such insurance might be less socialistic in its influence than the old poor laws of England, and might become a beneficial element in a well regulated industrial society.

There are a considerable number of professed political economists, who are not ready to call themselves socialists, who nevertheless adhere to the purely socialist doctrine, that inheritance of property is a violation of the rights of man. J. S. Mill took substantially this position, led to it by the assumption that the title to all property is derived from labor. It follows that the law, which gives to the son property for which his father alone labored, confers an unjust title. This conclusion must follow this assumed premise, but I hold the premise to be wholly false.

The first landing place of active agitation on the logical ladder which leads, from the admission that all value is created by labor, down the bottomless pit of socialism, is at present occupied by Mr. Henry George and his followers. Mr. George writes in a popular and

persuasive manner, and his writings have been widely read. His plan for the relief of the poor is to have the State take possession of all land and become the universal landlord, applying the rents received to the wants of the needy. This idea is not original with Mr. George, but he presents it just now in a new dress, and calls it "the nationalization of the land." It is an old notion, but has not received much attention heretofore from practical men, for the obvious reason that in practice it would multiply indefinitely the number of the needy, and would greatly decrease the number who would be willing to pay rent.

"Nature gives wealth to labor, and to nothing but labor. There is and there can be no article of wealth but what labor has gained by making it or searching for it, out of the raw material which the Creator has given us to draw from. If there was but one man in the world it is manifest that he could have no more wealth than he was able to make and to save. This is the natural order." From "Problems of the Time," by Henry George.

This is Mr. George's fundamental principle. If it is admitted there is no use in denying that private property in land is unjustifiable. But, believing this, why does Mr. George stop with this demand? Perhaps he doesn't like the looks of the pit below him, and fancies that mankind will be able to stop on his little landing place. But he is greatly mistaken. The inexorable ladder leads down to chaos. Give us once the nationalization of the land, and one must then follow the

footsteps of the anarchist and the nihilist to a lower deep.

The next important point to which a formidable body of socialists expect to carry affairs is the recognition of "the right to labor." It is for this the workmen of France are now pressing. If we admit that a portion of the soil is the birthright of every man, we must allow that society in taking possession of the soil, or permitting a limited number to take possession of it, deprives the landless of their rights. As a compensation for this deprivation—for this arbitrary taking away of the means by which nature intended all men to obtain support—society must provide each man with an occupation, an opportunity to labor, by which he may earn a comfortable living. This is "the right to labor." It is not a new idea. It was put in practice to a limited extent, but with most disastrous results, by the influence of Louis Blanc under the Republic of 1848. More than anything else this wretched attempt to force the State to support the artisans of Paris, disgusted the people of France with a republican form of government at that time, and prepared their minds to accept the empire of Louis Napoleon. Events are moving in similar grooves in France now. The French people are now more confirmed in republican habits of thought, but the socialist element is also stronger and more hopeful. The workmen expect to obtain power by their votes, and they propose to have the right to labor acknowledged, and a law passed fixing a minimum of wages, and forbidding the dismissal of laborers, except

for mutiny, and providing that the State shall lend capital to great corporations, which shall undertake the principal branches of industry. When this or any similar scheme shall be taken up by the French Republic, the world may prepare to hail another Emperor of France. He will not then be far away, although France may be obliged to pass through fire and ruin to find him.

It cannot fail to strike the curious inquirer as singular that although there are millions of men, who believe that value or wealth is created by labor, and that the title to all wealth should be in the laborers, who have produced it, that no community or state has been organized successfully on this principle. It is true that many such attempts have been made, but these have all proved total failures, with the exception of one or two, which still drag out miserable existences, furnishing illustrations of the wretchedness of the cause in which they suffer.

It is a matter of surprise too, that Mr. Henry George, having doubtless caused much mental misery among his landless readers, does not attempt to satisfy the longings for the happiness, which is to be obtained under "nationalization" of land, by organizing a colony to occupy some unappropriated part of the earth's surface. If Mr. George can show us by actual demonstration how a community, practicing his teachings, obtains more happiness individually and collectively than others, he will have done more to convince

us, than by printing the most eloquent appeals. As it is, he has only caused a great deal of discontent, and it is open for the least argumentative questioner to refute him, by pointing out the very considerable contentment and happiness which can be seen in societies acknowledging and protecting individual ownership of land, and challenging him to show better results under his system. The fact that he has made no attempt to do so, is to be counted against him, as showing lack of faith in his own principles.

During the last century the civilized world has been engaged in devising and celebrating the apotheosis of labor. Poets have sung its virtues. Orators have declaimed its merits. Statesmen have done it honor. And political economists have fallen down and worshipped it. Far be it from me to treat it with irreverence; but I wish humbly to suggest that there may be other gods in our economic pantheon, and that possibly a little incense, burned before some of the other productive powers of our mundane system, may be equally well consumed.

Our progenitors in prehistoric times adored the sun as the producer of all good. From his beams they seemed to derive all benefits, and to him they rendered all praise. Later on, in the dawn of history, the elements became the fashionable sources to which to accredit blessings. Earth, water, fire, air were all personified and deified, and mankind gave to them respectful prayers and thanks for the satisfaction of all their

wants. After a while the idea of deity became elevated, but throughout Christendom, for centuries, there were a great variety of saints and supernatural agents to whose kind offices prosperity and good fortune were ascribed. Just at the beginning of the commercial era of modern times, the precious metals received the eager reverence of men, as the wealth containing, if not the wealth producing powers. And when these lost this exalted station in the estimation of men, Quesnay and the physiocrats raised agriculture to the high place of creator of all value.

This is not by any means an enumeration of all the objects and forces to which homage has been rendered in return for the possessions, which men have used and enjoyed. But it is sufficient to show that there has been a difference of opinion, at different times, as to the real causes of wealth. It seems to show also that certain popular notions have prevailed, to the exclusion of all others, at certain periods. Noticing the fallibility of human opinion in past ages may suggest a doubt as to the correctness of our own time's belief.

It was, no doubt, in opposing the mercantile theory and the agricultural theory that Adam Smith suggested that labor was the first price paid for all things. The world was in the mood to take up and exalt labor. The author of the "Wealth of Nations" struck a responsive cord. Labor had been from the foundation of the world overlooked and despised. Invention was then beginning to furnish new means of satisfying desires. Commerce was developing new avenues of activity,

new regions of the earth's surface, and new political ideas. It was fitting that labor should be treated with greater respect, and be lifted to a more important place in the calculations of men. An era of progress in industry, hitherto undreamed of, was commencing.

The importance of the suggestion made by Adam Smith, at that time, can hardly be over-estimated. It gave a philosophical basis to the economic progress of the civilized world. But the time will come, if it has not already come, when the world may ask to its advantage, if there are not other elements of progress which deserve its attention, and whether there is not danger of reaching a pernicious extreme and subordinating the best interests of society to the demands of the self-conscious, all-demanding workingman — the spoiled child of the nineteenth century.)

I am far from believing that the real working men of this country, who are for the most part orderly, contented citizens, are avowed or secret socialists, and it is only of those who are members of socialist organizations and have socialist sympathies of which I now speak, as wishing to give labor a pernicious influence in society. But I hope to convince all candid readers, that the best interests of society are not to be served by unduly exalting labor as the creator of all value; but that a society in which there are many grades of individual inequality,—in which each, having different accomplishments, and diverse duties, does his best in his particular place, is the highest form of social devel-

opment, and that in which each enjoys most perfectly the happiness of which his life is capable.

I have endeavored to show what are the logical consequences of the assumption that all value is created by labor. I will now try to prove that this assumption is false, and that it has no reasonable foundation in human nature or in fact.

I must be understood as using the term labor, in the sense in which it is generally employed, as meaning manual labor, that is physical exertion directed by more or less mental effort and put forth for some useful end.

By the term value I mean only value in exchange, and by the term wealth, the aggregate of those things to which value in exchange attaches. I do not suppose that anyone, even the most stubborn socialist, will claim that value in use is always the creation of labor, or that things which have no value in exchange can be properly called wealth, although there are many passages, in the writing of Mr. Henry George, and others, which might be interpreted to have this signification.

* The South-Sea Islanders, who are able to supply their individual wants by their own individual exer-

* Captain Cook found some Australian tribes to whom the idea of traffic seemed unknown. They received what was given them readily, but they received it as a present only; they seemed to have no notion of giving anything in lieu of it.—*Bagehot, Economic Studies*, pg 41.

tions, have nothing to exchange with each other, and consequently have no wealth; but when a European trader comes, and offers beads for their cocoanuts, wealth makes its appearance. A man living and dying alone, on an unvisited island, has no wealth, although he may have all the wants supplied and many possessions. This word is used very loosely, even by political economists. It is frequently employed to describe possessions in general, without reference to their exchangeable quality. But unless it can be held to apply only to those possessions which have value in exchange, it loses all precision. Air and water are possessions, which have value in use but no value in exchange, and should be reckoned as wealth, if wealth is not limited to things which have value in exchange. Mr. George frequently uses the term wealth in this befogging sense, to describe things having value in use but no value in exchange. He has done so in a passage which I have previously quoted, but I do not think that he will contend that it is its proper use.

At all events, I am gaining no unfair advantage for my argument by confining the term to those things to which value in exchange attaches. The assertion that all things which have value in use are produced by labor refutes itself. There is no occasion for argument, unless wealth is held to mean only those articles which have value in exchange.

I have searched diligently, in works on political economy, for some proof that value in exchange is created by labor. I find plenty of assertions of this

dogma, plenty of references to authority, plenty of attempts to illustrate it by describing the doings of primeval men, but I have not been able to find any effort to derive this supposed rule from actual observation or experience. I have tried many times to discover in real transactions, in the most simple as well as the most complex, what influence the labor which had been employed in the production of an article has exerted in determining the ratio, in which it could be exchanged for other articles. But with all my efforts, (I have not found a single instance, in which the price demanded or paid for any thing bore any ascertainable relation to the labor which made it,) I may be more dull than others about this. I have often concluded that I must be so; but still the unguessed riddle would not leave me. I have not been able to admit to myself that an accepted axiom in economics could have no practical application. But, on the other hand, I have not been able to find any working illustration of this one, I find its influence everywhere in theory, but nowhere in practice. It is indeed frequently brought forward, as a specious argument, to affect prices. A manufacturer may resort to it to induce a better bid for his product, or a merchant may plead it to avoid loss on his wares. Its use is a favorite artifice among auctioneers. But if its use occasionally enables an expert to drive a better bargain, the trick is pretty sure to succeed only in single cases, and general market prices are not affected thereby. The only place, where it seems to be sin-

cerely accepted is in the destructive and revolutionary plans of the socialists.

Let any graduate of any of our many colleges start out, with the teachings of his professor of political economy, and the definition of value from his text book fresh in his mind, and engage in business on the basis that labor creates value. He will find many things selling for more, and many for less than they may appear to be worth, according to this standard. But he must buy for exact labor-value and, adding the value of his labor, offer them for sale at the exact labor-value, which they have acquired in his hands. If he should carry on a profitable business on this basis, he would furnish an illustration long needed in political economy. But no one can doubt the result of such an experiment. A lot of rubbish on which labor had been wasted, would be accumulated on his hands, which would wait in vain for purchasers.

Let any mechanic, who has been persuaded by Mr. George's writings to believe that value is created by labor, make a practical test. Let him rely on this principle fully, and make no contract for his remuneration before completing his work. But let him turn his hand to whatever work takes his fancy, and then let him call on the world to come and buy his product, at a price fixed according to the amount of labor he has expended upon it. Will his appeal bring purchasers? Will he not find that his ability to exchange the article which he has made, for money or for anything else, depends solely upon its adaptability to the

wants of some one, and not at all upon the labor which he has expended upon it? A few such practical trials of the first principles of socialism by workingmen, who have been attracted by the promising pictures drawn by socialist agitators, would produce a very good effect.

A very amusing account is given in Holyoake's "History of Coöperation" of several attempts about fifty years ago to establish labor-exchanges. These labor-exchanges were consistent endeavors to carry on trade upon the theory that all value is created by labor. It was provided that any kind of commodity could be brought to the exchange, and appraised according to the amount of labor expended in its production. Labor notes were then issued therefor, the unit of labor being one hour, and these notes were receivable in the exchange for any article according to its appraised price in labor units. Mr. Robert Owen, the wealthy philanthropist, was the originator and chief director of the most important of these labor-exchanges in London. He provided the means to start it, and gave his time to the superintendence of its operations. His popularity brought custom to it, and his ability gave the experiment the best possible chance of success. It carried on a large business from the start, and at first appeared wonderfully successful. A large amount of merchandise appeared on its shelves, and its labor-notes were circulated quite generally in the neighborhood. These notes were received with considerable favor by

local tradesmen in exchange for their goods, and it seemed as if a new era in commercial affairs had dawned. But soon it began to be perceived that the really desirable goods were disappearing from the shelves of the Labor-Exchange. The local tradesmen who had shown so much favor to the movement, at the outset, had succeeded in transferring to the Labor-Exchange their unsalable stocks, and had taken away the really valuable goods which the enthusiastic believers in labor-value had brought in. The labor-notes began to depreciate, and fell rapidly into discredit, when it was found that little remained in the Labor-Exchange worth the trouble of removing. The whole affair came to an end in less than thirty days after beginning business. There were labor-exchanges on the same plan started about the same time in Birmingham and Sheffield, and in America, in Cincinnati and New Harmony ; but all of these seem to have been miserable failures from the first.

It is strange that these very well known efforts to effect exchanges according to the generally received theory of value, should not have attracted more attention. As far as I know these were the only attempts of this sort ever made. They failed miserably, and yet the theory remained unshaken, and has been winning adherents ever since.

I think if any one analyses the elements of the price of any commodity, (Price, which is value expressed in money terms, affords the only opportunity for accurate obser-

vations of value.) he will find that labor employed in production bears no regular nor calculable proportion to the quantity of gold, for which the commodity may be from time to time exchanged. If such proportion cannot be discovered and stated in comprehensible language or figures, I claim that it is absurd to assert that labor determines value, and, if it is possible to be so, it is still more idle and foolish to maintain that labor creates all value.

I think that it will be acknowledged by any one, who studies the fluctuations of the markets, where the important commodities of commerce are bought and sold, that the wants of men are the chief influences which determine prices. The most favorable conditions for studying the influences by which prices are made are furnished by the great exchanges, in which the chief commodities, such as grain or cotton, are traded in. Here are concentrated, as in a focus, all these influences, and men of keen minds and wide information are giving closest attention to observe their force and effects.

No scientist gives more concentrated thought to the object which he holds under his microscope, than do the dealers in the great exchanges give to the course of trade. They, if any men, should know the powers which form and fix prices, and if there is any agency which creates or determines value, they should recognise and appreciate it.

Let the student of value go on the floor of the Board of Trade in Chicago, and observe what influences are

regarded as important in determining the price of wheat. He will find that all these influences may be classed easily under two heads, first, and perhaps most important, the demand, second, the supply. If he is able to impart any information, which may come under either of these heads, he will be listened to with eager interest. But suppose that he has been able to make an accurate calculation, which shows the amount of labor expended in producing a bushel of wheat, and that he exhibits this valuable contribution to economic science to the members of the Chicago Board of Trade. He will find that no one has any time to spare to attend to his great discovery, and that it will have no more effect on the course of prices than a calculation of the ages of the Pyramids.

The conclusion, after observing the opinions of experts in prices on the Board of Trade, will be that prices, and consequently values, are not determined by any one influence or class of influences. They are as uncertain as human life, and as changeable as human opinion. They are the evidences of mental actions, and not the creations of physical efforts.

The sap which swells the tree does not create the value of the timber. The chemical action, which formed the coal in the earth and the iron in the hills, made them exchangeable for wheat and corn, but did not determine their value in exchange. The wind and the rain and the sunshine have had their share in producing the things which man buys and sells and uses, but have had no part in the fixing of the market prices.

The labor of beasts has rendered man service, and so has the labor of slaves, but neither has had influence in determining how those services exchange. The labor of freemen differs in no economic sense from the labor of slaves. Each accomplishes its result according to the strength and skill of the laborer, and without reference to his political rights and condition. And this is true through the whole scale of labor, from the lowest drudge in the deepest mine to the professor of political economy in the most august university. It is the result which counts, not the instrument. The freeman has this advantage when the result is attained,—when the product of his labor is completed,—if he has not already sold his labor or his product, he may take it into the market and do the best he can with it. But he will find there, that it takes two to make a bargain, and that the labor which he has exerted cuts no figure in fixing value, unless it be that it has some subordinate effect on his own feelings. His main desire and his controlling motive will be to obtain for his product that which will give him greatest satisfaction, and on this basis the sale will be made.

It is frequently said, that cost of production determines value.● It seems to me that this amounts to no more than saying, that the value of a compound commodity is equal to the sum of the values of its component parts. This may be approximately true within certain narrow limits. If there is no considerable fluctuation in the values of the component parts, dur-

ing production, the value of the product, at the completion of production, will probably be about equal to cost of production. But it is quite improbable that the value of an article, completed a year ago, is now equal to cost of production, or that the value of an article, just finished, will be equal to cost of production a year hence.

This rule, even with these modifications, has many exceptions, and is not of much practical importance. It gives no opportunity for the deduction sometimes made from it, that therefore labor determines value. In those organized forms of production, to which this rule is generally applied, the labor employed is treated as a commodity. This it essentially is in all respects.

Cost of production never determines the value of agricultural products, or of railroad transportation, or of any commodity, in which the use of land or any article not capable of unlimited reproduction enters largely.

Mr. Henry George and other socialists object to treating labor as a commodity. They give no reason for this objection, but seem to regard such a consideration of labor as a desecration of a holy subject. I cannot see that labor has any place in political economy except as a commodity. It is bought and sold and exchanged with other commodities, and the attempt to invest it with a different character has produced a great deal of confusion. Man, as a laborer, has the same position in economics as any other machine through which productive force is exerted. But man as a rea-

soning being, having a soul and a vote, is entirely another thing, and is not treated of in political economy.

Labor figures in cost of production as a commodity, and exercises no more influence in the price of the product, than does the cost of the raw material or the machinery. And the influence of the values of these component parts is not direct and absolute in determining the value of the product, but only indirect upon the minds of men and thus, by affecting their judgments, upon the value. If any articles have been manufactured at a certain cost, under existing conditions, men suppose that more can be made while those conditions continue, at the same cost, and consequently will not pay much more, unless there is some urgency in the want; and the manufacturer, believing that the demand for his product will continue, will not sell below the cost of replacing it. This I think is a correct analysis of the way in which cost of production affects price, and it gives no ground for asserting that labor determines value.

The claim, which is set up in many works on political economy, that the earliest exchanges made were effected according to quantities of labor, which the first men put forth in taking possession of, or putting in useful shape, the first rude articles of personal property, seems hardly worthy of attention. But the brains of eminent men, such as Ricardo and Adam Smith have engaged in drawing these imaginative pictures,

and they doubtless have some influence on general thought. I cannot find any warrant for these idyls of the prime. The most careful research into ancient record and tradition has not brought to light any evidence, that early exchanges were made on such a basis. There has been no savage tribe discovered in which any such system of "natural" trade is recognized. On the contrary, the very extensive examinations of primitive customs, made by Sir Henry Maine and M. de Laveleye, have shown that the first men of whom we have traces, were not traders at all. Human beings in the early ages knew no way of acquiring property from others but by force. Savage life has always been a life of warfare. Peaceful exchange is a product of dawning civilization; and all the exchanges since then have been made to satisfy wants. It is highly improbable, therefore, that any men ever existed anywhere, who bartered with each other, according to quantity of labor. It is only in modern times that labor has been so systematized, and so subjected to measurement, that it could be compared in quantities, consequently no such comparisons could have been made in rude ages.

Colins, the Belgian socialist, has proposed to reduce this problem to its simplest terms—a naked man and a planet—and thus show that all wealth is created by labor. If the planet may be supposed as naked as the man, the problem would very soon solve itself, and the solution would be a dead man and a planet. If the planet is supposed supplied with an agreeable climate and plenty of fruits and pleasant things, the naked man

might get on very comfortably, but he would have no wealth, because his most enjoyable possessions would be too far from market, and would have no exchangeable value. The transportation rates, from the naked man's planet to the earth, would be more than the business would bear. But suppose there were two naked men started on an agreeable planet. Would their instincts lead them at once to establish a labor exchange? I think not. They would either form a primitive partnership and have all things in common, or one would become the slave of the other, or they would find that their dispositions were uncongenial. In the latter case one would either kill the other, or they would select separate hemispheres for their habitations. In fact, I think, about the last thing to suggest itself would be the possibility or utility of making a trade of some sort. But all such speculations are idle, and prove nothing either way. We have not solitary naked men on isolated planets to deal with, but many millions of men on a highly organized earth. There is a great deal of comfort and happiness enjoyed by these millions of men, and not a little of it is due to the high organization of the society in which we all make a living. It is much better for us to study the principles of this organization, that we may preserve and improve it, rather than contrive imaginary cases of imaginary beings to encourage us to despise and destroy it.

The pernicious influence which the fallacy that all value is created by labor, exerts over all thought at the present time might be illustrated by innumerable quotations, from all classes of writers. The deductions from this false premise appear on all sides. We have them from pulpits ; we find them taught in the public schools. We read them in all the newspapers, and in all sorts of publications. They appear in the messages of Presidents and in the addresses of Prime Ministers. Congressional documents abound with them, and political speeches are full of them. I have thought of making a collection of the most extraordinary outcroppings of this capital error. I could easily fill a volume with such quotations, and that, too, from the utterances of the most prominent men of the day. Strange reading such a volume would seem a hundred years hence, when, it is to be hoped, the socialist question will have been finally disposed of, and the world will be riding some other hobby. It would show that even the greatest men have a parrot-like way of using words, which they hear others use, and that few take the trouble to examine into the significance of popular expressions. One of the most common and most obvious of these deductions, that the title to all property is justly vested in the laborers, I will endeavor to consider briefly.

I would like to quote a whole chapter from J. S. Mill's Political Economy on this point, but I will for-

bear and content myself with a few of the opening sentences, which I think fairly represent his views. He says :

“The institution of property when limited to its essential elements consists in the recognition in each person of a right to the exclusive disposal of what he or she have produced by their own exertion, or received either by gift or by fair agreement without force or fraud from those who produced it. The foundation of the whole is, the right of producers to what they themselves have produced. It may be objected, therefore, to the institution as it now exists that it recognizes rights of property in individuals over things which they have not produced.”

Mr. Mill was judicious in his use of words, and carefully modified any expression which might be construed as bearing too harshly on established institutions, but he is forced by this definition of property to deny the right of inheritance, and the right of the landlord to the so called “unearned increment” in the value of the land. He shows doubt as to the justice of both of these in this chapter.

It is interesting to compare with this calm utterance of a philosopher, the opinions of the members of the *Mano Nera*, the Black Hand, of Spain. They say in their programme, issued before the last effort to assassinate those of their neighbors whom they thought better off than themselves,

“All property acquired by the labor of others, be it revenue or interest, is illegitimate ; the only legitimate

possessions are those which result directly from personal exertions."

This is not quite so well expressed, but it means the same, as Mr. Mill's words, and I do not see how Mr. Mill could severely criticize the assassins.

Mr. Mill was considerate and kind. He had no sanguinary or revolutionary spirit. Having stated his theories, such as his labor-theory of value, or this theory of the right of property, he modified them, and modified them, until they fitted pretty comfortably with existing facts. Some of his followers, however, are not so circumspect. They have adopted his theories, without the modifications, and they insist upon having the facts fitted to them.

M. de Laveleye says that Locke, the philosopher, was the first to state clearly the theory that labor is the basis of property, and Locke drew from this theory the following conclusion, which is not only a logical deduction, but is well developed socialist doctrine: "Every one ought to have as much property as is necessary for his support."

M. Thiers in his book "*De la Propriété*" adopts and states this theory most emphatically. "To every one," he says, "for his labor, because of his labor and in proportion to his labor. We may, therefore, say dogmatically, the indestructible basis of the right of property is labor." M. de Laveleye, commenting on this, says: "It may be said, that labor ought to be the source of

all property, but this principle would be condemnatory of the existing organization of society."

In examining this subject, I have been astonished and almost overwhelmed by the number and weight of the names of modern authorities, who have given their unqualified approval to this doctrine. I have been surprised beyond measure, also, that none of these great and good men seem to have realized that in adopting this theory they were proclaiming that the whole fabric of society everywhere is a monstrous fraud, and justifying its total annihilation. But I have been, if possible, more completely non-plussed by not being able to find the slightest evidence of the truth of this doctrine in law or tradition or custom, in nature or in revelation. Where can the doctrine have come from? What are its sanctions?

The lawyers know nothing of it. There is no hint of it in any of the codes, and neither the civil law nor the common law shows any trace of it. There are many kinds of title known to the law, but the title by labor is not one of them. (Unless it be, perhaps that patent and copyright laws can create for limited periods title by intellectual labor.) There is title by occupancy, title by possession, title by conquest, title by discovery, title by descent, title by purchase, title by gift—these all have been recognized and more or less respected, from time immemorial. If labor had any part in creating any of these legal titles, is it not strange that there should be no evidence of it? Is not

the conclusion unavoidable, that if labor creates the only rightful title, the whole body of the law, ancient and modern is founded in injustice? And does it not seem more reasonable, that the law by which the relations of men for generations and centuries and ages have been controlled, is worthy of more respect, than a sentiment of modern philosophy, which has never had any standing or influence in practice?

There is no recognition or suggestion of the title by labor in custom or tradition. Since Locke wrote on civil government, what amounts to a new department of human knowledge has been opened by investigation into the manners and customs of ancient peoples. And even since John Stuart Mill's work on Political Economy appeared, a most extraordinary addition has been made to our knowledge of antiquity. Of all those who have contributed to this new knowledge, Sir Henry Sumner Maine, probably stands first among English writers. His books are remarkable in that they draw few conclusions, but give many facts. They do not dogmatically assert that the dwellers in the twilight of history thought thus and so, but they exhibit all the evidence, and leave the reader to draw such inferences as seem warranted. I have read Sir Henry Maine's books with care, and I have not been able to discover a single suggestion, that it ever occurred to a primitive man that labor gave any title whatever to property.

The notions of property possessed by the first rude men, of whose existence we find faint traces, were

very simple compared with our own ideas. But they were not antagonistic to ours. Our habitual, almost intuitive, practices concerning property are but refinements and developments of the earliest conceptions of property rights, as described by Sir Henry Maine. He is of the opinion that the patriarchal theory of primitive life is the correct one. That is, that men at first associated in families, and that each family group was subject to the authority of the parent or eldest male representative of the parent. This life may have originally been as savage as that of wild beasts in their dens. From so low a point the organization of modern society may have begun. The earliest rules concerning property seem to have been for protecting the ownership of domestic animals. Land was a secondary matter, for there was plenty of it, but the flocks and herds were the objects of desire and contention. These animals were the property of the family, or rather of the head of the family, and each of the family whether natural kinsman or a member of the group by adoption, defended the flocks and tended them, and took his part in the common fortunes. Those families or tribes, which subsisted largely by hunting, probably appropriated certain territory and punished with death the intrusion within their limits of any other hunters. Sir Samuel Baker found the country near the sources of the Nile divided in this way, with well defined boundaries between many small tribes. Similar notions as to hunter's right to special ground were common among the North American Indians.

The right of ownership by conquest was early recognized. The property of enemies, even their persons, belonged without question to the victors. It is probable that the early transfers of property were all effected by conquest. There is no evidence of individual ownership of property among primitive men. The earliest transfers of property by agreement took place between families. It is conjectured that the first articles of individual property were arms or clothing. According to early Roman law, horses, cattle, slaves and land were all held by the same tenure, and could only be transferred with peculiar ceremonies, indicating that they were all regarded as the common property of the family or tribe, and could only be alienated by common consent.

From these rude origins the right of property developed its various modern forms. The general advantage seems to be the force which has produced the successive modifications. There is no sign, that through the whole progress, the right of the laborer to the product of his labor has ever been respected or even asserted. When men became sufficiently intelligent to live peaceably together in large communities, the advantage of individual ownership became evident. I have no doubt that under individual ownership land became more productive, cattle more carefully tended, and the state more prosperous. Individual land owners proved more energetic citizens in devising good government, and braver and more persistent soldiers in resisting invasion or pushing conquests. There is good ground for be-

lieving that the law of the survival of the fittest forced the adoption of individual ownership of land and other property upon mankind. But this process of change left so much of the old primitive law of property as could not be destroyed without disadvantage to society, notably the remnant of parental authority, and the principle of inheritance.

The development of custom is a very attractive field, and much more might be said to show that the labor-value theory of property has thus far had no part in shaping man's progress from the companionship with wild beasts to his present improved condition. I think I have said enough to convince any fair minded person that this is the fact. Whether man would have been better or worse, if at any point of his progress this theory had influenced him, is a matter of speculation purely. Of this, however, would society be benefitted by it? I think we of the present age should be well assured before allowing this theory to modify or change our institutions. It seems to me that its general adoption would dissolve all the bands of common custom, would unloose all the time-honored ties of social relations, would destroy the growth of centuries, would substitute anarchy for order, would make it impossible for one man to exist where ten now find subsistence, and would send those that remained of the race back to live in caves and to contest with animals for the fruits of the earth.

It may be that some readers will construe the

emancipation of laborers as the recognition of the laborer's title to the product of his labor. But this is not warranted. The emancipation of laborers was brought about by the same causes which produced individual ownership of land. The general advantage of society was served, at the periods in which the several modifications of law and custom were developed. Society became more prosperous with the growth of individual right to property, and still further increased in prosperity when it was conceded that manhood meant the responsibility of freemen. But it is not by any means the same thing to say, that man is free to choose how he will spend his time and his energies, and to say, that he has a clear title to the product of his labor. He may control his own powers, but he cannot control their effects.

If his labor is expended upon his own property, he owns the product, but if on the property of another, he has no title to the product. The title to the product invariably follows the title to the material. This is the rule everywhere. Let us suppose this rule reversed and the title to the product vested in the laborer rather than in the owner of the raw material. The dullest imagination can see that a state of affairs, such as never has existed, would make its appearance. Society would unravel like a web whose chief thread had been cut.

The laborer may sell his labor, but if he puts it forth without a previously made or implied contract, it is no longer salable. He may bargain to sell his labor while it remains in his control, as he may any other

commodity. In the early state of society he could not do this. His labor then was due to the family or community of which he was a member, and his family or community accorded to him a share in its fortune. When society realized that the general fortune would be much improved if men were left to shift for themselves, the laborers were emancipated. The emancipated laborer acquired the right to dispose of his own labor, but he, at the same time, assumed the risk of his own support. This new condition is undoubtedly highly beneficial to general society.

Stimulated to exertion by the necessity of providing his own support, and by the promise of greater comfort and enjoyment if he excels others, man has become violently competitive. There was little or no competition between individuals in patriarchal society. It is individual competition which has changed all the condition of life, and transformed the face of the habitable globe. It is this which furnishes food in abundance for ten times the number of human beings, which the patriarchal age could have supported.

Now and then, there may possibly be found a person, who would be glad to exchange his individual freedom in the nineteenth century, for a place in the tents of Abraham or in the caves of the Cyclops. There is nothing to be said in argument with such persons. Man cannot choose his birthplace or his birthright. It only remains for him to make the best of the fortune which falls to him. If there is anywhere at the present time any man so friendless and poverty stricken and unfor-

fortunate, that having the ability he can find no opportunity to earn his bread, it is truly pitiful. But it is a case for pity, not for wrath against the institutions of society.

Inequality in the conditions of men has not been removed by the development of individual liberty. It has been rearranged, on what we are bound to believe a juster basis. The inequality in social conditions is possibly greater to-day than in the most brutal days of slavery and serfdom. But to say this is not to condemn society.

The appeal to nature is the favorite recourse of modern advocates of the right of the laborer to the product of his labor. I can produce many instances of this appeal, but I will content myself with two or three quotations from Henry George's book, "Progress and Poverty."

"Thus there is to everything produced by human exertion a clear and indisputable title to exclusive possession and enjoyment which is perfectly consistent with justice, as it descends from the original producer in whom it is vested by *natural* law."

"Hence as *nature* gives only to labor, the exertion of labor in production is the only title to exclusive possession."

"It is a strange and *unnatural* thing that men who wish to labor in order to satisfy their wants cannot find the opportunity."

There are many more, but these are sufficient to show the character of the appeal.

I do not know exactly what is Mr. George's conception of nature and of natural law, but it is evidently a work of the imagination, and not at all founded on fact. The philosophers of the last century amused themselves and their sentimental admirers by describing man in a state of nature. By this they meant a sort of idyllic paradise, where imaginary beings, endowed with imaginary attributes, conducted themselves according to an imaginary set of rules, which they were pleased to call perfect justice or natural law. If Mr. George refers to these well known fairy tales, his reference is intelligible and consistent, but it hardly furnishes a serious foundation for an argument.

But if Mr. George means by nature "the veritable system of things of which we ourselves are a part," or by natural law, that unchanging law by which all things exist, and in accordance with which we live and move and have our being, he is speaking without sufficient consideration. The law of gravitation and the law of the impenetrability of matter are natural laws. Mr. George is surely very hasty, if he means that the title to property is vested in the original producer by a law of this kind. Natural laws are invariable. There are no exceptions to their operations. But there is no evidence that it has ever been recognized that any title to the product was created by labor. That can hardly be a natural law to which all human action furnishes a continual exception. As there is no title by labor

known in fact, it is obvious that if nature means the system of things as they are, nature has ordained no such title.

There is another sense in which the word nature is often used. In this sense it is contrasted with art, and is applied to that condition of things, which the art of man has not modified or changed. In this sense nature can hardly grant any title to the laborer, for as soon as man has exerted his efforts upon a natural object, it ceases to be in the domain of nature.

Mr. J. S. Mill regretted that Plato had not left to posterity a Socratic dialogue "On Nature," so that the precise definitions of this term might have been handed down through the centuries and much confusion of thought, probably, thereby prevented. To meet this long felt want, Mr. Mill gave us his chapter on "Nature," as an introduction to his "Essays on Religion." The careful perusal of this chapter would, I think, effectually deter his followers from claiming that the laborer has acquired any title from nature to the product of his labor. Mr. Mill recognizes as the only proper uses of the word those which I have given above. First, nature as including man and all things as they are, and second, nature as including all those things which the art of man has not modified or changed. In the first sense, it is absurd to say that anything is according to nature which is not an invariable fact. It is then only in the second sense that it can be claimed that nature gives to the laborer a title to the product of his labor.

But it is contrary to experience and observation, that

such title is conferred by nature. To determine what nature does we must observe man uninfluenced by art. But the only men in a state of nature, of whom we have any knowledge are savages. If nature gives to the laborer the product of his labor, we should find a natural instinct to this effect in the breast of the most untutored savage. I am ready to admit, that my opportunities for observing untutored savages have been few, but I think that the eminent political economists and socialists have not been more favored in this respect. I have not found in the writings of any of them any attempt to cite examples of this instinct in savages. On the contrary, I have read many descriptions of the habits of savages, by well known travelers, and I have never yet found any suggestion that any savage, even the very lowest, had a sense of acquiring right to property by the labor of production. Among savages the ownership of property seems to be determined solely by the ability to retain control of it. The natural instinct of man is to possess himself if he can of those things which will satisfy his wants. Of this there is abundant proof. The untutored savage takes whatever he sees, that he wants, if some stronger power than his does not prevent him, and never thinks whose labor has produced it.

Does any man doubt this? Can there be any other conclusion reached by calmly considering this question? What possible justification then is there for the appeals to nature which are so liberally uttered by Mr. George, and his followers? Where can the slightest evidence

be found that nature has vested the title to any property in the laborer who produced it?

Perhaps it is well, in order to account for the many confident appeals to nature which are made by Mr. George, as well as by abler men and more consistent reasoners, to refer once more to Mr. Mill's essay. He there describes a use of the word nature, which is a survival of those superstitious times, in which all the attempts of men to interfere with the action of natural forces were regarded as impious. There are probably some ignorant persons, even now, who look upon lightening rods and preventives of diseases as irreverent challenges of the wisdom of Providence. By a confusion of ideas, with such persons, nature comes to mean the designs of Providence, and also such an ordering of the affairs of this world, as they think ought to be. The appeal to nature thus becomes merely an assertion of their own opinions; those actions which they approve being according to nature, and those which they disapprove unnatural. This is a common use of the word, and will be found frequently in the speech and writings of men whose ideas are vague, but who wish to express themselves emphatically. The appeal to nature, to establish the title of the laborer to the product of his labor thus resolves itself into a mere begging of the question. The socialist in effect says, such a title ought to be because it ought to be. This is the whole of his argument from nature.

It is according to our observation of nature, that mothers love and protect their offspring, and we are

correct in saying that she is an unnatural mother, who neglects or destroys her child. But it is not according to our observation and experience, that opportunities are uniformly provided by any natural agency for men to satisfy their wants by labor. Nature produces with entire disregard to the wants of man; she takes no pains to satisfy his wants. She is careless whether he is starved or surfeited or poisoned by that which she produces. The opportunities which he enjoys to satisfy his wants by labor must be and always have been contrived by his own intelligence. If his intelligence can not contrive the opportunity, nature lets him perish. It is not according to experience that nature loves and protects the laborer. She is deaf to his desires and blind to his efforts. She destroys the product of industry and the most industrious laborer also, and has no remorse.

In one sense nature is the rich but blind enemy of man. All that he possesses he seizes from her, and he is always in danger from her heedless blows. Through the knowledge of nature, acquired with infinite ingenuity and handed down and augmented from generation to generation, men have constructed an elaborate structure of art. It is art which enables man to elude the destructive strokes of the sightless giant nature, and it is art which teaches him to snatch her products and adapt them to his ever developing wants. Art is the work of man. It is unnatural for it is in one sense opposed to nature. It is artificial. But it is not unnatural in the same sense as is a mother's cruelty to her

child. The right of property is unnatural in this sense alone because it is artificial. It is a part of that slowly developed system of art, by which man has grasped the products and powers of nature and caused them to satisfy his wants.

Nature seems totally oblivious that man has any title whatever to property. She takes possessions from one and destroys them, or confers them upon others, without rule or reason. In a state of nature there is no property right, unless the control which the wild beast exercises over his lair and his prey may be dignified by that name. The whole idea of title to property, it seems to me, is the creation of art. We can not peer back into the primæval gloom to detect its earliest suggestion. But look where we may, we find no recognition of it in nature.

It is probable, therefore, that man invented property right as he invented the so-called division of labor, to enable him the better to contend with nature. And when he found that the idea of right of property encouraged production, and helped to satisfy more of his wants he defined it more clearly and gave it greater respect. And this, I think, may describe the whole process. It has not been one uninterrupted series of improvements. Not every change has been beneficial. But the whole development has been greatly for the advantage of society, and he is little better than a madman, who would destroy the growth of centuries because he is not satisfied.

Through the whole development of the right of prop-

erty, it does not appear, as I have already endeavored to show, that the title of the laborer to the product of his labor has been thought worthy of practical consideration. It is entirely opposed to the whole spirit of this development, and it can not be adopted now without subverting and destroying the artificial fabric of civilization.

Deprived of the appeal to history, to custom or to nature, it may be that the socialists will turn to religion for a justification of the laborer's title to the product of his labor. I do not think that socialists have at any time been remarkable for religious professions or practices. On the contrary, I think that socialism is commonly associated with the most sacrilegious opinions. But there are some, who like Henry George, are not too conscientious to quote a mangled verse of scripture, now and then, if it seems to them that they can thereby make a point. And there are multitudes of well meaning people, who have a decent respect for the words of the Bible, who are influenced thereby. There are, moreover, a great many teachers and preachers of Christianity, who reason loosely, and whose sympathies, being with the poor, are ready to take the view of society which seems popular, and encourage the belief that somehow the laborers have been unjustly deprived by the rich of the products of their labors. I do not say, that the doctrine, that the title to the product of labor ought to vest in the laborer, is definitely taught from Christian pulpits. I do not think, that Christian

ministers often reason sufficiently closely on such matters, to arrive at such precise conclusions. But I have heard many expressions from such sources which tend in that direction, and which show that current discussion is shaping the minds of religious people to accept this belief.

It seems to me, however, that this doctrine is as opposed to the spirit of Christianity, as it is to existing law and order. The teaching of the Old Testament is that all property is the gift of God, and the man who serves God is encouraged to expect prosperity. Loss of property is represented to be a trial of man's faith, as in the case of Job, and steadfast faith in God is rewarded by a restoration of his property greatly increased. When the children of Israel sinned against Jehovah, they were punished by loss of property and other calamities. When they obeyed the commands of Jehovah, the property of their enemies was given to them. Nowhere in the Bible is there any suggestion, that man acquires by labor a just title to the product of his labor, such a suggestion would be not only foreign to, but destructive of the teaching of the Bible. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." This seems to be the epitome of the doctrine of the Bible concerning property.

The New Testament and Christianity built upon this foundation but did not change it. The spirit of Christ's life and teaching was self-renunciation not self-assertion. There is something better worth work-

ing for than the accumulation of property. He said, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the son of man shall give unto you." He taught, that under certain circumstances it was the duty of a rich man to sell all that he had and distribute to the poor; but this sacrifice was to be made for the rich man's own benefit. He was thereby to acquire "treasure in Heaven." The poor were not taught by him to demand gifts from the rich. Such demands would be hostile to his teachings.

In the time of Jesus Christ the political and economic affairs of men were in a deplorable condition. They were in much worse condition than similar affairs at the present time. I suppose the most hardened socialist will not deny this. There was little protection for life or property, and fraud and dishonor and nameless crimes were too common to be noticed. This was especially true of Herod's Kingdom, and of the provinces into which it was divided. There was hardly any social order. Government was only the forcible execution of military commands, and bloody factious fights rendered it continually uncertain who were the government. A very considerable portion of the men of Palestine were openly robbers, and the multitude of publicans or tax-farmers were little better. There was no such thing as justice. The rights of men, if any one had thought of them, would have seemed utterly absurd. The Romans were the masters of the world, and the favorites of the Roman Emperor went every-

where, seizing whatever pleased them, punishing all resistance to their pleasures with scourging and torture and cruel deaths, and spending their plunder in brutal, vicious and lavish luxury.

Surely then, if ever, a divine revelation of the right of the laborer to the product of his labor would have been appropriate. Surely then, if ever, divine encouragement to rise and assert its rights, was needed by down-trodden and demoralized humanity. But such was not the burden of the divine message. The Christ had nothing to say of the rights of man ; he passed in silence the laborers who had no title to the products of their labors, he even advised peaceful submission to the foreign military tyrants who ruled his countrymen. He suffered himself without complaint the undeserved punishment of scourging, and bore without revolt or remonstrance, having broken no law and done no wrong, the most manifest injustice,—the ignominious death by crucifixion.

The divine message in that den of thieves, which the world then was, was not resistance to oppression, but, "Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you," etc. If we can imagine a country peopled solely by such men and women as now fill our prisons and occupy the attention of our police, we would probably not conceive a state of affairs so bad, as existed in Palestine about the year 30 A. D. To such a community the divine word was preached, "Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other." It was, indeed, light shining in darkness.

This I think is the spirit of Christ's teaching, and of true Christianity, at least so far as the question of the laborer's title to the product of his labor is concerned. (If he were entitled to this product, the spirit of Christianity would prevent the assertion of such title.)

I have been at a loss to discover how such ideas as the following are obtained from the teachings of Christ.

Dr. Geike, in his "Life of Christ," says the seminal principle of Christianity is "the realization of the truth that the whole human race are essentially equal in their faculties, nature and inalienable rights."

This is, I think, a fair example of similar expressions which occur often in the writings of eminent exponents of religion. I give it here, because it is the latest of such expressions which I have noted. It seems to me not only an error but an error which can only be explained by a confusion of ideas. Christ taught that each individual is the object of his Heavenly Father's love, and when any individual labors and is "heavy laden," he may find rest in his love. He taught that all men are children of the Heavenly Father. But I do not recall any expression which can be construed to mean that they are equal in any other respect. Saying that all men are children of God does not imply other equality among them.

Indeed I think the introduction of this claim of equality, as a fundamental doctrine of Christianity, is

a grave mistake and not authorized by the words of the Bible. I think it also a dangerous heresy, subversive of the real spirit of Christianity. Men are not equal in fact in their faculties. Men are all embraced in human nature. They are all parts of nature in general. It is a confusion of ideas to say they are equal in nature. It is a form of words which has no precise meaning. Whether men are equal in their inalienable rights depends upon the organization of the society in which they live. Men have no rights outside of society. To say then, as Dr. Geike does, that "the whole human race are essentially equal in their faculties, nature and inalienable rights," is the seminal principle of Christianity, is to say that Christianity is founded upon a proposition which is either untrue, vague or variable, as you regard it in each of its threefold divisions. It is moreover a proposition calculated to produce discontent in the minds of men, against society. This Christ never did. His teaching was directed to making the individual discontented with himself on account of his own sinfulness. This kind of discontent may be beneficial, for it may produce regeneration.

The new view of religion which mankind gained from Christ was the special importance of the attitude of the individual toward God. Before his time the family, the tribe or the nation was supposed responsible for the religious behavior of its members. Christ taught that God looks into the heart of man to judge him. From this new view sprang the increased import-

ance of the individual in other relations of life, and, although its influence may not be directly traced in the development of individual right of property, it may nevertheless have been felt there. And this new view of each man's personal responsibility to God for his doings may have aided in working out the economic conclusion, that man is a more productive member of society, if he is politically a freeman. The connection of the teachings of Christ with this modern belief is not close. It requires some pious blindness to overlook the christian slave-makers and slave-holders of eighteen centuries, and to attribute to the spirit of Christianity the emancipations of the nineteenth century. Yet there is a connection. It may be that the advances of the individual in many directions are kindred developments of upward reaching man, and that all are but parts of and stages in the whole harmonious growth.

Competition is the result of emancipation. This Christianity encourages, as it teaches the responsibility of the individual ; and it harmonizes with the modern ideas, that individual freedom of action and individual freedom in acquiring and controlling property, produce the noblest forms of personal and social life. The full recognition of individual responsibility involves the keenest competition.

But Christianity adds to its commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart," by which is inculcated man's individual responsibility to God, this second commandment which is like unto it in importance, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

That is, if I may give these teachings a modern form, competition should be tempered with charity. "On these two commandments" Christ said, "hang all the law and the prophets." On the proper observance of these two principles at the present day seems to depend the maintenance and improvement of modern civilization.

It may be seen that I have gone too far in tracing a connection between the Christian doctrine of the responsibility of the individual to God, and individual competition. As I have already said, the connection is not close. It is not at all necessary to my argument that it should be admitted at all. I have only introduced it here as a suggestion of the harmony which may be established between the Christian religion and the working of economic laws, and to hint how the best results of competition are obtained, when it is modified by charity.

I think this consideration may also suggest the fundamental antagonisms between Christianity and socialism. As far as I have been able to observe all socialists are anti-christian. I think this irreconcilable difference lies in the Christian teaching of the responsibility of the individual to God, and in the fact that Christian charity is essentially voluntary and not compulsory.

My argument would probably seem unsatisfactory to most readers, if I should leave it at this point. I think I have shown conclusively, that value is not created by labor, and that although labor may have been expended in producing many of the articles to which we attach value, there is no traceable relation between the labor and the value, which can justify us in saying that the labor creates or determines the value. In proving this I have also shown that there is no warrant for the claim that all wealth is produced by labor. And I think I have also made it clear, that the assumption that the just title to the product of labor vests in the laborer, rests on no basis which is worthy of respect. If I have done this so successfully, that any one reading what I have written, with ordinary attention, is convinced, I have destroyed the foundations of socialism. This is what I hoped to do, but I am conscious that socialist notions and half-beliefs are so common, even among men who fear and abhor socialist practices, that the destruction of the ground work of socialism must leave vacancies in many minds, and I wish, if possible, to provide some sound doctrine to take the place of those erroneous beliefs, which I have tried to destroy.

There is a great deal of misery in civilized communities, and human nature is so constituted that the knowledge of suffering causes pain, and begets an impatient desire to relieve misery and remove its cause. The first impulse which every one feels at the sight of

suffering is that it has been caused by some human agency, and that some wrong has been committed. If a ship founders at sea, we hasten to accuse the owners or officers of criminal negligence. If a passenger train leaves the rails and a hundred lives are lost in its débris, we blindly rage against all the servants of the railroad company, from the brakemen to the ornamental directors.

The desire to punish some wrong-doer follows almost immediately in most minds the perception of misery. Human nature seems to demand a victim in whose person suffering shall be expiated. And this demand is often unreasoning and even passionate. Among savages it provides bloody human sacrifices to gods. It once led men to burn innocent and harmless old women, as witches. Among more civilized men it develops itself in various phases, from the shooting of landlords in Ireland, to the execration of railroad kings in America.

It is this human disposition to find a wrong at the bottom of all suffering, which opens the minds of men to admit the labor-value fallacy. The lowest classes in all civilized communities suffer more or less. There are very many men, women and children, in the large cities of Europe and America, who frequently cannot obtain food, clothing and shelter, when they need them. These bear emaciated, frost-bitten bodies, the easy prey to diseases, and some of them sometimes die in circumstances of heart-rending wretchedness. The well-fed, comfortably housed man turns away from such

sights, and would gladly be without the knowledge that such things exist, but somehow he cannot escape the feeling that such things ought to be prevented. And when the socialist agitator draws the startling contrast, between the condition of the starving, fever pinched wretch, and the luxurious millionaire, living perhaps within a stone's throw of each other, we are apt to imagine that somehow the latter is accountable for the misery of his human brother. Let the socialist tell of the hardships of the brakeman who in darkness and storm performs his perilous duty on the top of the rumbling freight train, and then let him picture the brave man crushed in a great collision, and with his last breath expressing the fear that his wife and child will come to want. Let this story be continued, and show how the child dies from starvation, and the wife drowns herself to escape a worse fate, and then let the socialist describe the comfortable home and luxurious life of the president of the rail-road, whose property has been benefitted by the brakeman's labor. Let him then in eloquent and impassioned words assert that a great injustice has been done, that the brakeman and his family have been wronged, and that the rail-road president has profited by the wrong, and that it is a vicious organization of society which permits the president to enjoy his wealth, while the brakeman and his family perish. Then the socialist may conclude triumphantly, and nine out of ten men will be led by their aroused sympathies to agree with him, that as all

wealth is created by labor, justice can never be secured until all property is vested in the laborers.

It requires calm consideration to perceive that the unfortunates who exist everywhere, have no just complaint against society, and very likely have not suffered wrong from any one. But calm consideration cannot fail to bring unprejudiced minds to this conclusion. The fact of coming into the world gives no individual a right to food, clothes and shelter, but human love and sympathy give these as favors, almost always, while the individual is unable by reason of weakness or lack of skill to secure them for himself. But if the individual having sufficient strength and skill makes no effort to acquire those things which he needs, love and sympathy will probably cease to provide them.

However much benevolently disposed people may wish that all men may be comfortably provided with food and clothes and shelter, it is impossible that this can ever be. These must always remain the rewards of well directed exertion, and there must always be some who fail to make the exertions, or whose exertions are not well directed. There must always be, as there always have been, some to whom daily bread does not come day by day, and some of these unfed mortals must be overlooked by the most vigilant benevolence. But for the failures of the unfortunates, or for the oversights of benevolence, neither society nor its prosperous members are to be blamed.

Society is a highly organized and complicated system, differing in its form and development in different

places and for different peoples. The principles on which various forms of society are based, may at one time have been mere arbitrary rules. If so they have become crystalized into immemorial customs, and have been approved by the ages of progress toward the general advantage of the members of society. There have been steps in this progress. There have been at sometimes slow changes, at others rapid advances, at others retrograde movements, at others stagnant hesitation. But if the best state of man is that in which knowledge is most widely diffused, freedom of action most untrammelled, and the most diverse wants are most completely satisfied, the society of the present day, as represented in our own country, and in some of the states of Europe, has reached the highest development ever known.

There are many persons of, I think, envious dispositions, to whom inequality in the condition of individuals seems a greater hardship than general deprivation. Such persons are disposed to lament the changes which have been made in the last hundred years. They say that industrial and commercial activity has made the rich, richer, and the poor, poorer. That political enfranchisement of the workingmen has not checked this growing inequality. That one hundred years ago employers and employed worked together, and were on terms of friendly intercourse. But, to-day, the employer knows no more of his workmen than their ability to complete their tasks. He would as soon make companions of his machines as of those to whom he pays wages. This may be true in a degree. It is undoubtedly the

tendency of the organization of industry to draw master and men apart. The most successful manufacturer, or merchant, is he who carries on his business on a large scale, pushing the division of labor to the limit of economy. The manager of such a business is likely to regard his laborers as parts of a great machine, and to have little feeling of companionship with them. If this is an evil, it is one which is made necessary by active competition. The most successful manager is likely to have this characteristic most highly developed.

But is this anything more than an imaginary evil? Can no amount of increase in the comfort of his life compensate the workman for losing the society of his boss? If the master has gradually drawn away from intercourse with his men, the men have gradually gained in the increased purchasing power of their wages. Of this there is no doubt. Workmen now wear better clothes, eat better food, and enjoy luxuries which one hundred years ago were not within the reach of the most opulent. What matter if the social scale has been lengthened? Should it not satisfy the critic of progress, if all have been raised to higher planes of consumption?

But there is another consideration, which I do not remember to have seen noticed, and which seems to me of vast importance. About seventy years ago, Malthus predicted great evils for England, when the products of its soil would no longer feed its population. But the population of England has increased far past that point, and the general prosperity of the

country is said to be greater than ever. The support of this increased population has been furnished by the organization of industry and commerce, effected by competition. This, as a factor in the food problem, Malthus did not take account of. But it has changed all the conditions of life of the people of England. The English workman of to-day has very different surroundings from those of his predecessor in the time of Malthus. He may not now have so much country to roam in. He may not be able to keep a cow or have a patch of ground in which to grow a few roots. But he is equally well-fed, well housed and well clothed, and moreover there are twice as many of him. This is the point which generally escapes remark. The whole case is not by any means presented, when the individual of to-day is compared with the individual of fifty or one hundred years ago. There are twice as many human beings living comfortably in England to-day as were there when Malthus thought that population was already pressing upon the limits of subsistence. Is this an evil or a good? We would call it a great calamity if war, pestilence or famine should destroy every other inhabitant of a country. Ought not then that to be reckoned a great blessing which doubles population, and sustains the increase as well as the smaller population was previously maintained? Competition has done this. The stimulus to individual exertion afforded by laws which protect each man in the enjoyment of property acquired in conformity to law, by laws which enforce contracts and give to men-

tal exertion a greater advantage than it ever before enjoyed over physical labor, has enabled millions to keep soul and body together, and to feel more or less of the joy of existence, who never would have visited these glimpses of the moon at all if the "good old times" had continued.

Do those reformers who look regretfully into the past, and assert that the life of the English laborer, as pictured by De Foe, was preferable to the life of the English workman of the present, ever reckon the multiplication of human life a blessing? Speaking in the interest of the poorer classes, as they professedly do, do they realize what a return to the habits and mode of living of the time of De Foe would involve? It would involve the crushing out of the lives of millions. Every turn of the wheel backward toward those conditions under which the workman and their employers lived and worked together would exterminate millions. The most wretched, the lowest in the scale of self-support, those whom the socialists profess to be most anxious to benefit, would go first. But before the imagined comfort of the laborer of De Foe could be restored,—the common cow pasture and the vegetable patch,—vast masses of population to whom the competitive system furnishes easily, food and raiment, would find the means of existence cut off and would perish miserably.

"The bitter cry of outcast London," of which we have heard something lately, is not less bitter because it is not peculiar to our time. The wailing of the suf-

fering has gone up from the comfortless dens of all large cities since men devised metropolitan life. It is the desire of every man of human impulses to mitigate, or if possible relieve wholly this misery. But every right minded man can see this can never be wholly accomplished. If any one compares the condition of the abject poor of London, as described in recent newspaper articles, with the condition of English laborers during and previous to the last century, as described by Fielding, Defoe, Macauley and others, he cannot avoid the conclusion that the very outcasts are now better provided for than were once the common workingmen. There is a certain advance from the chimney-less, window-less hut, whose floor was the bare ground covered with rushes and accumulated filth, to even the worst single-room tenement of the present London slums. And even the repulsive bed and bedstead in the vilest furnished lodgings of this day are better than the dirty straw and the wooden pillow, which were once the best couch that English laborers hoped for. This comparison should not cause us to pity less the wretched outcasts of to-day, but it should prevent us from rising in rage and cursing the organization of society. Whatever has been done to raise the conditions of human life has been done by society. That wretchedness and poverty remain, perhaps as keenly felt as ever, is due to an ineradicable characteristic of human nature. The art of man, working in the form of social organization, may multiply comforts, may make it possible for two human beings to

obtain subsistence where one could with difficulty secure it before, but it cannot abolish poverty or annihilate wretchedness. Poverty and wretchedness are relative facts. They imply contrasting affluence and contentment, and while individuals are created under differing conditions and are endowed with differing faculties, this contrast must exist. What would have been affluence several centuries ago is accounted poverty to-day.

The Malay enjoys a bodily comfort, beside which the frozen existence of the Esquimaux seems poverty, but, as neither knows of the life of the other, the one feels no self-satisfaction, the other no envy. But the life of a large city brings these opposite conditions in juxtaposition. Art produces for the rich the equable temperature, the delicate fruits, the delight of flowers and tropical foliage, which the Malay enjoys, side by side with dark, cold and cheerless dens in which the poor greedily appease the cravings of hunger with food as nauseous as that of the Esquimaux. This contrast serves to exhibit the reality of affluence and poverty. It develops exultation and pride on the one hand, the grinding torments of envy on the other.

There is opportunity for a very long and comprehensive essay on the causes which produce inequalities in the material circumstances of individual lives. The tendency of historical research at the present time is to find out and identify these causes. The efforts to learn the thoughts, habits and conditions of people, and by

these to explain developments of national traits and events in national progress are the manifestations of this tendency. I have not the time or space here, nor indeed have I the learning or ability to go into this subject at length, nor does my present subject demand it. But it seems to me that a voluminous collection of historical data might be made to show that the wealth accumulating faculty has been developed in individuals and nations by a sort of natural selection. The differentiation of civilization has, as the naturalists would say, specialized the perception of value. Man as far as we know in his savage state had little or no perception of value. When men began to trade they began to recognize value in exchange. An infant has no perception of this value. Savages and infants desire and attempt to possess themselves of whatever will satisfy their wants, but the complicated perception of what will satisfy the wants of others, and thus enable them by exchange more completely to satisfy their own far off wants, is beyond their powers. In this respect some human beings, even in civilized communities, remain savages and infants all their lives. I think any of us can readily find, in our own neighborhoods, men and women in whom the perception of value is merely rudimentary. Such persons may be highly qualified in other ways, may in fact possess many amiable and admirable faculties, but lacking this they are comparatively poorly equipped in the struggle for life under present conditions. In this commercial, competitive age it is necessary that the value-perceiving individuals

should hold the chief social power, just as in ruder times those who possessed the fighting faculty dominated their fellowmen. The value-perceiving geniuses of our day do not depend for their authority upon the suffrages or the favor, but upon the needs of their fellow men, just as the best soldiers once acquired command by mere force of circumstances. We are all familiar with the process by which excellence in the perception of value asserts itself. There are well known stories in every family, in every social circle, in every village, in every community of how this or that individual, perhaps with most unpromising beginning, gradually developed this faculty, surpassed his associates, organized industry, managed trade, attained wealth, and became a pillar of society on which his friends lean, and to which his neighbors look with respectful admiration. And equally common are the stories of failures and descents from prosperity to misery, by reason of the lack of this faculty.

I do not wish to intimate that the value-perceiving faculty is the highest or most to be desired. I merely wish to suggest that in the present state of society, which I believe is the highest which man has ever attained, it is the faculty to which the greatest power attaches, and I think a very considerable benefit may accrue from the simple recognition of this fact. This removes at once all ground for the common feeling that the well to do members of society are accountable for the misfortunes and failures of the degenerating and incompetent. The rich, as a class, have no more

just responsibility for the misery of the poor than do the whole and healthy for the pains and infirmities of cripples and imbeciles. The attitude of the rich to the poor should be one of pity, but there should be no shade of remorse. The attitude of the poor to the rich should be one inviting compassion, but not demanding compensation for wrongs inflicted. Of course I mean by this only the abject poor, actually suffering for the necessities of life. I am prepared to maintain that a comparatively poor man may be, and should be, as happy and independent as any rich man, asking no favors and confining his wants strictly within his resources. If any one has not the value-perceiving faculty he can not acquire, and unless fortunate in his friends, can not retain wealth, but he can lead a contented and independent life by limiting his wants to his means. This is one of the most useful results of the recognition of this analysis of faculties. A great many beneficial members of society have not the value-perceiving faculty well developed. Artists, musicians, teachers, clergymen, skilled laborers and those who have no skill can not be expected to possess this faculty in any considerable excellence. For all these, a great point has been gained, if they realize the existence of the faculty and their own lack of it. They will then no more expect to be rich than to be phenomenally strong or extraordinarily beautiful. There is a very common notion, that the acquisition of wealth is a matter of luck, and very many simple minded people are seduced by this notion to attempt to win

fortunes in various forms of gambling. But one may as well hope to add a cubit to his stature as to acquire permanent wealth in this way. It is notorious that the sudden acquisition of money or property by any one, not accustomed to its use and care, produces demoralization, and results in waste and ruin. It is as absolutely certain that the individual who has not possessed and cultivated the value-perceiving faculty, can not retain possession of a fortune, which may be thrown in his lap by chance, as it is that water poured out on a hill top will seek the water course in the valley. The great gains in all forms of gambling go ultimately to the value-knowing manipulators of the games, and those, who are lacking in the value-perceiving faculty, and are eager to try their luck, furnish the wealth which the expert gamblers gather in. He is fortunate who correctly estimates his own value-perceiving ability and is wise enough not to contend with those who are better endowed or better equipped than he.

It is in his intellect that man differs from the beasts, and it is in intellect that one man differs from another, making as wide a difference between the highest and lowest man as between the lowest man and the highest beast. The value-perceiving faculty is highly developed in the highest intellect. He who has this faculty will accumulate wealth by comparatively slight exertion, while he who has it not will not gain wealth, no matter how energetically he labors. Races and families differ widely in respect to this faculty, but it is generally true, perhaps by natural selection, that the races and fami-

lies highest in general development and in prosperity, exhibit this faculty most largely. Other things being equal, he who has the keenest appreciation of art will paint best and will enjoy the best painting ; he who has the most delicate musical sense will secure the most perfect musical instrument and will perform most satisfactorily thereon. So he who is the best judge of value will make the best bargains, and will most rapidly accumulate wealth.

Mr. Matthew Arnold in "Literature and Dogma" elaborated a theory, that the Jews, the children of Israel, were "the people who had the sense of righteousness most glowing and strongest," just as the Greeks had the sense of art, and the Romans the military spirit in greatest perfection. A similar theory might, I think, be worked out and illustrated by plentiful historical examples, to the effect that the sense of value has characterized the Jews even more particularly and persistently than the sense of righteousness. I think it can be shown to be reasonable that this sense of value, possessed by the Jews in an unusual degree, has kept the race for centuries separate from others and distinct among other peoples. Without the military sense or spirit, with no country which they could call home, they have been distinguished from other men by their keen perception of value, and by this trait have preserved their lineage and their identity through centuries of change and decay in other races. That the Jews have fairly inherited this faculty no one can doubt, who reads the story of Jacob. They are true children

of that Israel, who drove the sharp bargain for the birthright with the value-dull Esau, and placed the ring-streaked rods by the water-troughs of Laban's heifers.

The best development of the value-appreciating faculty has passed beyond the mere bargain-driving stage, and the greatest commercial successes are achieved by the organization of industry and the systemization of methods. The true commercial spirit of modern times asks only a fair field and no favors, seeks only trade which benefits both buyer and seller, increases wealth by ingenious devices, by more economic transportation, by the use of banks and clearing-houses and boards of trade or exchange. It has contrived that the earth, or that portion of the earth to which its influence extends, sustains a hundred millions more human beings than the same countries could furnish food for fifty years ago. And all this, which the commercial spirit has accomplished, it alone can sustain. If the intelligent energy of this spirit is checked, if the well devised system of its operation is disordered, the abundance of its results, on which so much depends, will decrease. Each degree of this decrease will bring straitened circumstances to millions, hard times, difficulty in obtaining food, and in some cases absolute inability to sustain life. Surely such a prospect should warn us to oppose no discouragement to the commercial spirit. Yet this is exactly what socialism demands of us. In their blindness and folly the socialists would take the management of property from

the hands in which the present organization of society has placed it, would have a redistribution of property, so that those who have had no experience in its management, would hereafter manage it. They would reconstruct the laws, so that those who possess the value-sense, the wealth accumulating faculty would no longer be able to enjoy any special reward for the exercise of their talent. They stupidly imagine, no doubt, that civilization will somehow continue to exist when the motive power has been destroyed. They fancy that somehow the hands which have been taught to labor, will continue laboring when the brains, which taught and directed them, are dead or torpid. But any such expectation is the most fatuous imbecility.

While I maintain that all the demands of the socialists are unwarranted, and that the least yielding to any of them will cause social damage, I am far from claiming that the social organization is now perfect. It is a wonderful development as it now exists, but I doubt not, that it is capable of greater development and improvement. But its healthy and beneficial growth can only be in accordance with the principles which have brought it thus far. I do not doubt that, by wise measures and the diffusion of correct ideas of life, the comfort and happiness of all classes of men may be greatly improved.

The improvement in the condition of those who labor with their hands, it seems to me is not to be brought about by the demands of labor societies, when

such demands 'are based on the theory that labor creates value. (I believe that it is highly proper, and shows the possession of the value-perceiving faculty, for laborers to unite in trade-unions, for the purpose of securing the highest market price for their labor,—the commodity which they have to sell.) But the real hope of improving the laborer's condition is in the diffusion of the gentle spirit among all classes. This might be called culture, if that word had not acquired a certain priggish significance. It is not by loudly claiming what he supposes are his natural rights, that the laborer is to be benefitted, but by lending a hand in sustaining and advancing civilization as he finds it. He must be the friend and not the enemy of society, if he would enjoy life. What matter if he finds himself somewhat low on the social scale? If he rightly estimates his faculties and does his best to make them useful, there is a fair share of contentment for him. If instead of ruminating on the unaccountable circumstances, which have given to certain of his fellow men greater advantages and greater powers than he possesses, he endeavors to cultivate among those with whom he comes in contact, mutual respect and the recognition of the worth of individual character, he will be far happier. The substitution of efforts to deserve well, for efforts to secure all possible rights is an indication of the gentle spirit.

In a state of nature, selfishness is uncontrolled. It is neither desirable nor possible to eliminate selfishness from man. It is an essential part of him. But the

best results of civilization are gained by stimulating individual exertions by proper rewards, and modifying selfishness by proper self-restraints. Without selfishness man would have no force. But the selfishness of a well-trained man is to natural selfishness, as the appetite of a polite dinner-guest is to the hunger of a wild beast. The one satisfies its cravings decently and in order, and with due regard to the similar cravings of others, but the beast rends and devours and gorges himself, oblivious of all but his own satisfaction. The civilized man, whether he be laborer or manager, value-sharp trader or value-dull star-gazer, should not be devoid of selfishness, but should hold it like his passions in firm control. He should do this for higher reasons than mere selfish wisdom suggests, yet pure selfishness, if it be intelligent, must approve this self-restraint, for by reason of it, when generally exercised, each individual secures most prolonged and fullest enjoyment.

The pictures which socialist agitators draw of the lives of rich men, in order to induce laborers to cast aside all self-restraint and give their selfishness full rein, are commonly grossly untrue. But even if they were true, the argument based upon them is a gross fallacy. Suppose that rich men pass their lives in vicious excesses, what possible good can the laborer derive by meditating on this state of affairs, or by imitating it to the best of his ability? The intent of this fallacy is to lodge in the minds of the laborers the

notion, that the wealth which they have somehow created is being spent in riotous living, and that the laborers ought to participate in this sort of enjoyment, which is supposed to attend this use of riches. The cunning of the fallacy lies in first inflaming the passions, or at least the prejudices of laboring men, by vicious descriptions, and then teaching them that these wasteful excesses are indulged at their expense. No reasoning could be more unsound. It is true that the conduct of every member of society is a matter of interest to every other member. But this is a rule which applies to rich and poor alike. The rich man is as greatly injured by the poor man's debauchery, as is the poor man by the rich man's vice. The question of personal conduct is entirely removed from the question of property.

But the socialist agitators carry their attempts to arouse prejudice in the minds of working men to a still more vicious extreme, and represent in certain cases the mere possession and enjoyment of riches as a wrong. The name of Vanderbilt is so commonly used as a synonym of great wealth, and the persecution and abuse heaped upon Mr. Wm. H. Vanderbilt and his family, by certain newspapers and would-be labor reformers, is so well-known and so unrelenting, that I may be excused in using this name in an illustration.*

* I wish to make it plain that I have used this name only by way of illustrating my point clearly and with no intention of appearing as the champion of any individual. For Mr. Vanderbilt's name may be substituted that of any other law abiding citizen who possesses and manages property acquired in the development of American enterprises.

It is not charged that Mr. Vanderbilt's wealth has been acquired in an unlawful way, or that it is employed by him for unlawful purposes. It is not charged that he has robbed any man, or that any man is the poorer to-day by reason of his possessing millions. As far as is known, Mr. Vanderbilt and his family are respectable people, affectionate in their family relation and reasonably courteous in their intercourse with friends and strangers. They have done nothing to attract public attention to themselves. They have not been overbearing or ostentatious, and have set no example of vicious or corrupt luxury. But it is known that Mr. Vanderbilt owns a large amount of stock in several important railroad companies, which probably afford him a larger income, than any other man in this country enjoys. On this account alone he is made to appear in a peculiar and unenviable light to a large part of the people of this country. His face is freely caricatured in all the comic papers. Almost every week he is depicted leading a typical workman in chains, or is represented as a fierce dragon devouring helpless laborers with their wives and children. Newspaper correspondents vie with each other, in inventing unfavorable gossip about him and his surroundings, and leading articles daily denounce him without stint. In fact so far is this misrepresentation—this outrage upon private life and character carried, that I think a considerable part of the American public conceive of him as a sort of resurrected Nero or Caligula—a modern tyrant, gross and remorseless, levying cruel and unjust assessments

on the poverty-stricken people who travel on his rail-roads, smiling at the tears and groans of his victims, and muttering as he figures up his dividends, "the public be damned."

The fact is, Mr. Vanderbilt is receiving a proportionately small, and a well earned part of the profits of the greatest economical device of modern times. Mr. Vanderbilt's father possessed extraordinary ability. He had the value-sense largely developed, and with it great energy and persistence. He organized and perfected a great system of cheap transportation, which has brought immense wealth and prosperity to the people of this country. The results of the combinations which his genius effected are an unprecedented increase in the means of subsistence, an unparalleled multiplication of population. It is very likely that some of the reckless agitators, who are to-day denouncing the Vanderbilt family, owe the bread they eat to Commodore Vanderbilt's commercial genius. It may be said, that some one else would have consolidated the New York Central and Hudson River rail-roads, and extended its connections in the West, if Commodore Vanderbilt had not done so. This may or may not be probable. No one can tell. But if so, some other man's children would to-day be enjoying the Vanderbilt income. He who renders a great service to society is worthy of a great reward. Mr. W. H. Vanderbilt is to-day receiving his just dues, under the contract which civilized society holds with all its members. This contract is the very corner-stone of all civilization. To injure or

destroy it is to turn mankind about and start the race on the downward road to barbarism. Even to question its importance argues ignorance and degeneracy.

Mr. Vanderbilt's large income is often spoken of as a monstrous injustice in a republic. This shows a singular confusion of ideas, and that there are some persons who imagine that a republican form of government is somehow to cause an equal distribution of mental and physical powers to all its citizens. This is not, and never can be its function or object. The equal protection of every man in the exercise of his peculiar powers, is the object and glory of republican government. By this means each man is encouraged to use his powers to the best advantage, and the results which he may be able to attain are guaranteed to him and to his children, according to their ability to retain them. Mr. Vanderbilt's large income should be regarded as an evidence of the grand opportunities afforded under well regulated popular governments. It should be an incentive to every citizen to be diligent in devising economic benefits for the public, that he and his children also may be rich and prosperous.

While I am writing this a cable dispatch comes to the effect that Mr. Henry George has been received on arrival at the rail-road station, in London, by fifteen hundred persons, representing the Land Reform Union, and that he has made a speech. The telegraph represents him as saying :

“Power must always be with the masses. Do not ask for patronage or charity, but demand justice—your own rights, and the rights of those below you. In this way we shall conquer.”

There is a great deal of very dangerous error in these few words, but the fifteen hundred people whom Mr. George addressed are probably doing their best to believe these errors, to propagate and to act on them. And in this fact lies the necessity of exposing these errors and refuting them, lest great social damage be done, lest multitudes suffer useless misery.

The power which the masses possess is mere physical force. Without intelligent guidance it is no more than the power of so many beasts. And whether this power is to be exerted benevolently or malevolently depends on the wisdom with which it is directed. It must be manifest to every man, that this power misguided will do immense harm. If, then, the masses are led to believe that they suffer injustice, when no injustice is done them, or that they are denied some rights, when in fact they are enjoying all their possible rights, it must be admitted that they are grossly misguided, and are in danger of doing great mischief. The question then is, are the masses deprived of any just rights? By the masses I suppose Mr. George means those persons who have little or no property, and are dependent on their daily earnings for their daily sustenance. To this question then the answer is plain. All men are equal before the law; all men have equal rights. This is true to its fullest extent in this country. It is true

with but slight limitations in England. Those who compose the masses, and those who make up the remainder of society, have the same rights, and society guarantees and secures to each man, whether he be rich or poor, laborer or capitalist, the enjoyment of these rights. These rights are numerous and well defined. The right of personal liberty, and the right to acquire, possess and dispose of property, are perhaps the most important ; and it is the last and most carefully guarded triumph of civilization, that no discrimination is made against any man in respect to his rights, on account of his learning, his belief, his wealth or his position in the state. The laborer has now the same rights, no less and no more, which every other man possesses. Neither Mr. George nor any other man can truthfully deny this. What then does Mr. George mean, when he urges workingmen to demand their rights ? He can mean nothing else but that the masses have rights, which others, who are not the masses, do not possess. If he means this, he is leading the masses to demand something more than their just rights. He is striving to direct the power, which is in the masses, to the upsetting of the benevolent development of society. He would have the masses destroy the organizations of industry and commerce, by removing the master minds who direct them. He would deprive mankind of all motive for exertion but the mere temporary desire for food and clothing. Any higher object, if attained, would lift an individual above the masses, and would work a deprivation of the sup-

posed rights, which he exhorts the masses to demand. The spirit of Mr. George's harangue is to discourage all effort but that which is merely physical, and to substitute for the competition of intellect, a competition of idleness. Is this the proper intelligence to guide the power of the masses?

Mr. George has at various times indulged in a good deal of unpleasant rant about Mr. Wm. H. Vanderbilt and his so-called unearned wealth, but it has probably never occurred to him to make a comparative statement of the happiness and misery which he and the much abused millionaire are causing in their day and generation. Mr. George very likely counts himself something of a philanthropist, yet a truthful statement of this kind might surprise him. It is not necessary to give Mr. Vanderbilt credit for benevolent motives, or to take into account his active charities, if such there are. It is needful only to assume that he manages his large property on just business principles, and it is easy to see that he is constantly furnishing the means of living to a large number of men, and that he is instrumental in assisting a much larger number to acquire a portion of the comforts which they enjoy. But what have been the results of Mr. George's efforts? Has he ever conferred any material benefit on any considerable number of his fellow-men? Has he not rather rendered a great many men discontented? Is not the sum of human misery increased by the work which he has been engaged in? Are not the fifteen

hundred workingmen of London worse members of society for the exhortations which he has addressed to them? If his words have been heeded, he has unquestionably rendered labor less cheerful and hence less efficient. Discontent among laborers causes slackening of exertion and waste in production. Can any one, who has given any attention to Mr. George's addresses to workingmen, doubt that they have retarded the wheels of industry in a thousand factories?

Mr. George says to the workingmen of London, "Do not ask for patronage or charity." There is a tone of manly independence in these words which is very deceptive. No man should ask for charity except as the last resort. A proper spirit will lead a man to practice all possible economy and self-denial rather than ask charity. In this self-denial lies the manliness of not asking charity. But this is not the meaning of Mr. George. Self-denial and personal economy have no place in his teachings. He tells his followers not to ask patronage or charity. Now asking patronage is entirely different in character from asking charity. The only sense in which the word patronage is used in commercial affairs is as an equivalent for the favor of customers or employers, or favor in trade. It is necessary for success, in nearly if not quite all the modes by which men make their livings, that they should ask patronage. And he who is most apt at soliciting patronage is, other things being equal, likely to secure the best living. The banker, the merchant, the physi-

cian, the lawyer, and even the clergyman have well known ways of asking patronage. The railroad company and the manufacturer ask patronage most persistently and are not ashamed. Why should laborers be too proud in spirit to ask the patronage of employers? The tradesman does not think it unmanly or humiliating to ask people, who have the means, to buy his goods. It might be more according to his taste to put out no sign, to make no display of his wares, but to wait for purchasers to find him as best they could. A shopkeeper who scorned to ask patronage, however, would have to content himself with small profits in these days of active competition. Yet this is the line of conduct which Mr. George advises laborers to pursue. Having the commodity labor for sale, they should not ask for employment. They should stand proudly apart and wait until employers solicit them to labor. Is it anything unreasonable to say that the laborers, who follow Mr. George's advice, will be left behind in the race by the patronage-asking laborers? The latter will find the best work and the best pay, and will enjoy prosperity, while Mr. George's misguided disciples, neglecting to ask patronage, but demanding more rights than other people, will remain floundering in poverty.



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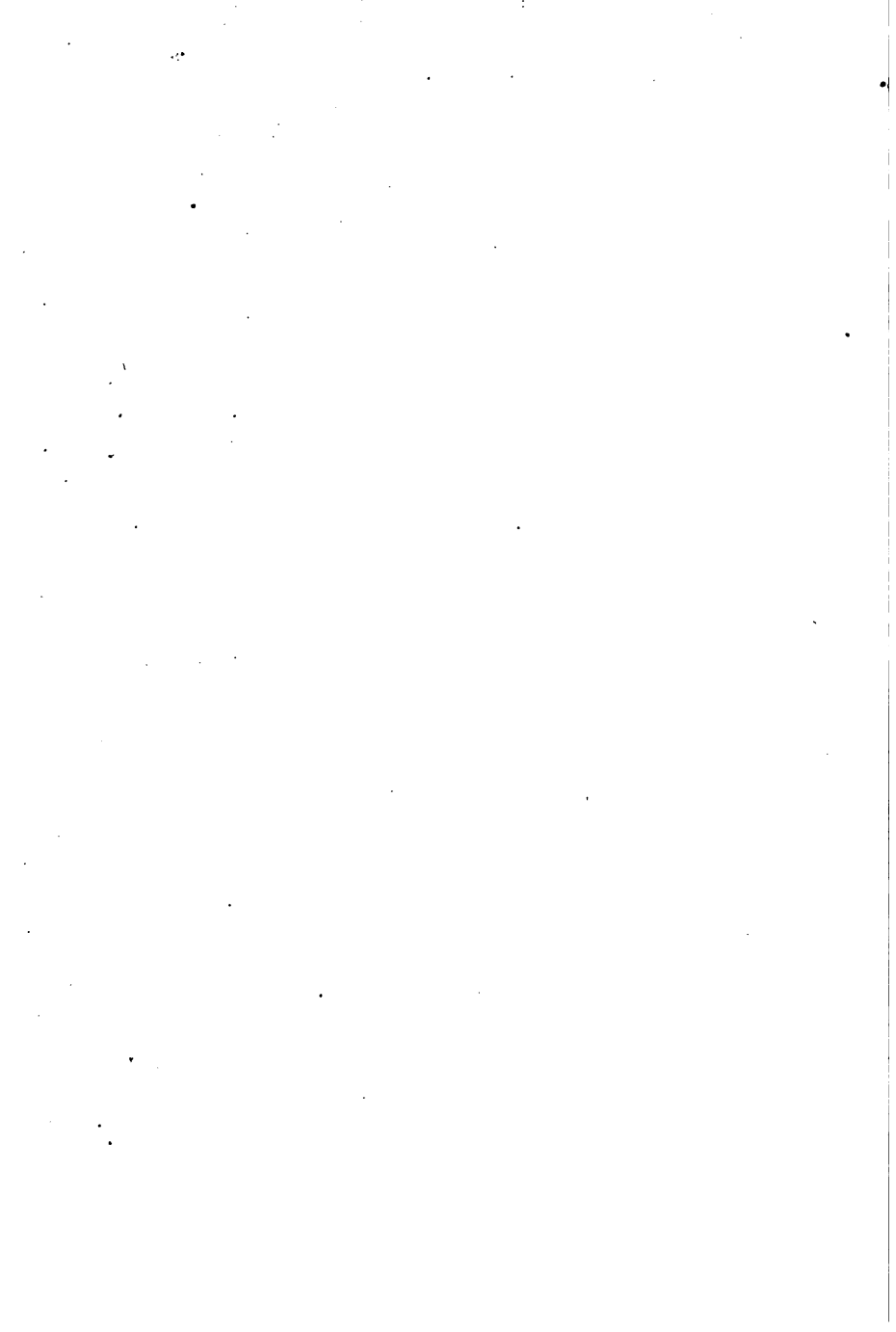
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